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LONDON : CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY, W.

THE EVIL GENIUS

A Domestic Story

BY
WILKIE COLLINS



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1886

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THE EVIL GENIUS.

FIFTH BOOK.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HEAR THE LAWYER.

“MR. HERBERT LINLEY, I ask permission to reply to your inquiries in writing, because it is quite likely that some of the opinions you will find here might offend you if I expressed them personally. I can relieve your anxiety on the subject of Miss Sydney Westerfield. But I must be allowed to do so in my own way—without any other restraints than those which I think it becoming to an honourable man to impose on himself.

“You are quite right in supposing that Miss Westerfield had heard me spoken of at

Mount Morven, as the agent and legal adviser of the lady who was formerly your wife. What purpose led her to apply to me, under these circumstances, you will presently discover. As to the means by which she found her way to my office, I may remind you that any directory would give her the necessary information.

“Miss Westerfield’s object was to tell me, in the first place, that her guilty life with you was at an end. She has left your protection—not to return to it. I was sorry to see (though she tried to hide it from me) how keenly she felt the parting. You have been dearly loved by two sweet women, and they have thrown their hearts away on you—as women will.

“Having explained the circumstances so far, Miss Westerfield next mentioned the

motive which had brought her to my office. She asked if I would inform her of Mrs. Norman's address.

“ This request, I confess, astonished me.

“ To my mind she was, of all persons, the last who ought to contemplate communicating in anyway with Mrs. Norman. I say this to you ; but I refrained from saying it to her. What I did venture to do was to ask for her reasons. She answered that they were reasons which would embarrass her if she communicated them to a stranger.

“ After this reply, I declined to give her the information she wanted.

“ Not unprepared, as it appeared to me, for my refusal, she asked next if I was willing to tell her where she might find your brother, Mr. Randal Linley. In this

case I was glad to comply with her request. She could address herself to no person worthier to advise her than your brother. In giving her his address in London, I told her that he was absent on a visit to some friends, and that he was expected to return in a week's time.

“ She thanked me, and rose to go.

“ I confess I was interested in her. Perhaps I thought of the time when she might have been as dear to her father as my own daughters are to me. I asked if her parents were living : they were dead. My next question was, ‘ Have you any friends in London ? ’ She answered : ‘ I have no friends.’ It was said with a resignation so very sad in so young a creature that I was really distressed. I ran the risk of offending her—and asked if she felt any embarrassment in respect of money.

She said : ‘ I have some small savings from my salary when I was a governess.’ The change in her tone told me that she was alluding to the time of her residence at Mount Morven. It was impossible to look at this friendless girl, and not feel some anxiety about the lodging which she might have chosen in such a place as London. She had fortunately come to me from the railway, and had not thought yet of where she was to live. At last I was able to be of some use to her. My senior clerk took care of Miss Westerfield, and left her among respectable people, in whose house she could live cheaply and safely. Where that house is, I refuse (for her sake) to tell you. She shall not be disturbed.

“ After a week had passed I received a visit from my good friend, Randal Linley.

“ He had on that day seen Miss Wester-

field. She had said to him what she had said to me, and had repeated the request which I thought it unwise to grant; owing to your brother, however, the motives which she had refused to confide to me. He was so strongly impressed by the sacrifice of herself which this penitent woman had made, that he was at first disposed to trust her with Mrs. Norman's address.

“Reflection, however, convinced him that her motives, pure and disinterested as they undoubtedly were, did not justify him in letting her expose herself to the consequences which might follow the proposed interview. All that he engaged to do was to repeat to Mrs. Norman what Miss Westerfield had said, and to inform the young lady of the result.

“In the intervals of business, I had felt

some uneasiness when I thought of Miss Westerfield's prospects. Your good brother at once set all anxiety on this subject at rest.

“He proposed to place Miss Westerfield under the care of an old and dear friend of her late father—Captain Bennydeck. Her voluntary separation from you offered to your brother, and to the Captain, the opportunity for which they had both been waiting. Captain Bennydeck was then cruising at sea in his yacht. Immediately on his return, Miss Westerfield's inclinations would be consulted, and she would no doubt eagerly embrace the opportunity of being introduced to her father's friend.

“I have now communicated all that I know, in reply to the questions which you have addressed to me. Let me earnestly advise you to make the one reparation

to this poor girl which is in your power. Resign yourself to a separation which is not only for her good, but for yours.—
SAMUEL SARRAZIN.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LISTEN TO REASON.

Not having heard from Captain Bennydeck for some little time, Randal thought it desirable in Sydney's interests to make inquiries at his club. Nothing was known of the Captain's movements there. On the chance of getting the information that he wanted, Randal wrote to the hotel at Sandyseal.

The landlord's reply a little surprised him.

Some days since, the yacht had again appeared in the bay. Captain Bennydeck had landed, to all appearance in fairly good

health ; and had left by an early train for London. The sailing master announced that he had orders to take the vessel back to her port—with no other explanation than that the cruise was over. This alteration in the Captain's plans (terminating the voyage a month earlier than his arrangements had contemplated) puzzled Randal. He called at his friend's private residence, only to hear from the servants that they had seen nothing of their master. Randal waited awhile in London, on the chance that Bennydeck might pay him a visit.

During this interval, his patience was rewarded in an unexpected manner. He discovered the Captain's address by means of a letter from Catherine, dated "Buck's Hotel, Sydenham." Having gently reproached him for not writing to her or

calling on her, she invited him to dinner at the hotel. Her letter concluded in these words :—" You will only meet one person besides ourselves—your friend, and (since we last met) our friend too. Captain Bennydeck has got tired of the sea. He is staying at this hotel to try the air of Sydenham, and he finds that it agrees with him."

These lines set Randal thinking seriously.

To represent Bennydeck as being "tired of the sea," and as being willing to try, in place of the breezy Channel, the air of a suburb of London, was to make excuses too perfectly futile and absurd to deceive anyone who knew the Captain. In spite of the appearance of innocence which pervaded Catherine's letter, the true motive for breaking off his cruise might be found, as Randal concluded, in Catherine herself. Her residence at the seaside, helped

by the lapse of time, had restored to her personal attractions almost all that they had lost under the deteriorating influences of care and grief; and her change of name must have protected her from a discovery of the Divorce which would have shocked a man so sincerely religious as Bennydeck. Had her beauty fascinated him? Was she aware of the interest that he felt in her? and was it secretly understood and returned? Randal wrote to accept the invitation; determining to present himself before the appointed hour, and to question Catherine privately, without giving her the advantage over him of preparing herself for the interview.

In the short time that passed before the day of the dinner, distressing circumstances strengthened his resolution. After months of separation, he received a visit from Herbert.

Was this man—haggard, pallid, shabby, looking at him piteously, with bloodshot eyes—the handsome, pleasant, prosperous brother whom he remembered? Randal was so grieved, that he was for a moment unable to utter a word. He could only point to a seat. Herbert dropped into the chair as if he was reduced to the last extremity of fatigue. And yet he spoke roughly; he looked like an angry man brought to bay.

“I seem to frighten you,” he said.

“You distress me, Herbert, more than words can say.”

“Give me a glass of wine. I’ve been walking—I don’t know where. A long distance; I’m dead beat.”

He drank the wine greedily. Whatever reviving effect it might otherwise have produced on him, it made no change in

the threatening gloom of his manner. In a man morally weak, calamity (suffered without resisting power) breaks its way through the surface which exhibits a gentleman, and shows the naked nature which claims kindred with our ancestor the savage.

“Do you feel better, Herbert?”

He put down the empty glass, taking no notice of his brother's question. “Randal,” he said, “you know where Sydney is.”

Randal admitted it.

“Give me her address. My mind's in such a state I can't remember it; write it down.”

“No, Herbert.”

“You won't write it? and you won't give it?”

“I will do neither the one nor the other. Go back to your chair; fierce looks and

clenched fists don't frighten me. Miss Westerfield is quite right in separating herself from you. And you are quite wrong in wishing to go back to her. There are my reasons. Try to understand them. And, once again, sit down."

He spoke sternly—with his heart aching for his brother all the time. He was right. The one way is the positive way, when a man who suffers trouble is degraded by it.

The poor wretch sank under Randal's firm voice and steady eye.

"Don't be hard on me," he said. "I think a man in my situation is to be pitied—especially by his brother. I'm not like you; I'm not accustomed to live alone. I've been accustomed to having a kind woman to talk to me, and take care of me. You don't know what it is to be

used to seeing a pretty creature, always nicely dressed, always about the room—thinking so much of you, and so little of herself—and then to be left alone as I am left, out in the dark. I haven't got my wife; she has thrown me over, and taken my child away from me. And, now, Sydney's taken away from me next. I'm alone. Do you hear that? Alone! Take the poker there out of the fireplace. Give me back Sydney, or knock out my brains. I haven't courage enough to do it for myself. Oh, why did I engage that governess! I was so happy, Randal, with Catherine and little Kitty."

He laid his head wearily on the back of his chair. Randal offered him more wine; he refused it.

"I'm afraid," he said. "Wine maddens me if I take too much of it. You have

heard of men forgetting their sorrows in drink. I tried it yesterday ; it set my brains on fire ; I'm feeling that glass I took just now. No ! I'm not faint. It eases my head when I rest like this. Shake hands, Randal ; we have never had any unfriendly words ; we mustn't begin now. There's something perverse about me. I didn't know how fond I was of Sydney till I lost her ; I didn't know how fond I was of my wife till I left her." He paused, and put his hand to his fevered head. Was his mind wandering into some other train of thought ? He astonished his brother by a new entreaty—the last imaginable entreaty that Randal expected to hear. " Dear old fellow, I want you to do me a favour. Tell me where my wife is living now ?"

" Surely," Randal answered, " you know that she is no longer your wife ?"

“Never mind that ! I have something to say to her.”

“You can’t do it.”

“Can *you* do it ? Will you give her a message ?”

“Let me hear what it is first.”

Herbert lifted his head, and laid his hand earnestly on his brother’s arm. When he said his next words he was almost like his old self again.

“Say that I’m lonely, say that I’m dying for want of a little comfort—ask her to let me see Kitty.”

His tone touched Randal to the quick. “I feel for you, Herbert,” he said warmly. “She shall have your message ; all that I can do to persuade her shall be done.”

“As soon as possible ?”

“Yes—as soon as possible.”

“And you won’t forget ? No, no ; of

course you won't forget." He tried to rise, and fell back again into his chair. "Let me rest a little," he pleaded, "if I'm not in the way. I'm not fit company for you, I know; I'll go when you tell me."

Randal refused to let him go at all. "You will stay here with me; and if I happen to be away, there will be somebody in the house, who is almost as fond of you as I am." He mentioned the name of one of the old servants at Mount Morven, who had attached himself to Randal after the break-up of the family. "And now rest," he said; "and let me put this cushion under your head." Herbert answered: "It's like being at home again"—and composed himself to rest.

CHAPTER XL.

KEEP YOUR TEMPER.

ON the next day but one, Randal arranged his departure for Sydenham, so as to arrive at the hotel an hour before the time appointed for the dinner. His prospects of success, in pleading for a favourable reception of his brother's message, were so uncertain that he refrained—in fear of raising hopes which he might not be able to justify—from taking Herbert into his confidence. No one knew on what errand he was bent, when he left the house. As he took his place in the carriage, the newspaper boy appeared at the window as usual.

The new number of a popular weekly journal had that day been published. Randal bought it.

After reading one or two of the political articles, he arrived at the columns specially devoted to "Fashionable Intelligence." Caring nothing for that sort of news, he was turning over the pages in search of the literary and dramatic articles, when a name not unfamiliar to him caught his eye. He read the paragraph in which it appeared.

"The charming widow, Mrs. Norman, is, we hear, among the distinguished guests staying at Buck's Hotel. It is whispered that the lady is to be shortly united to a retired naval officer of Arctic fame; now better known, perhaps, as one of our leading philanthropists."

The allusion to Bennydeck was too plain to be mistaken. Randal looked again at

the first words in the paragraph. "The charming widow!" Was it possible that this last word referred to Catherine? To suppose her capable of assuming to be a widow, and—if the child asked questions—of telling Kitty that her father was dead, was, in Randal's estimation, to wrong her cruelly. With his own suspicions steadily contradicting him, he arrived at the hotel, obstinately believing that "the charming widow" would prove to be a stranger.

A first disappointment was in store for him when he entered the house. Mrs. Norman and her little daughter were out driving with a friend, and were expected to return in good time for dinner. Mrs. Presty was at home; she was reported to be in the garden of the hotel.

Randal found her comfortably established in a summer-house, with her knitting in her

hands, and a newspaper on her lap. She advanced to meet him, all smiles and amiability. "How nice of you to come so soon!" she began. Her keen penetration discovered something in his face, which checked the gaiety of her welcome. "You don't mean to say that you are going to spoil our pleasant little dinner by bringing bad news!" she added, looking at him suspiciously.

"It depends on you to decide that," Randal replied.

"How very complimentary to a poor useless old woman! Don't be mysterious, my dear. I don't belong to the generation which raises storms in tea-cups, and calls skirmishes with savages, battles. Out with it!"

Randal handed his paper to her, open at the right place. "There is my news," he said.

Mrs. Presty looked at the paragraph, and handed *her* newspaper to Randal.

“ I am indeed sorry to spoil your dramatic effect,” she said. “ But you ought to have known that we are only half-an-hour behind you, at Sydenham, in the matter of news. The report is premature, my good friend. But if these newspaper-people waited to find out whether a report was true or false, how much gossip would society get in its favourite newspapers ? Besides, if it isn’t true now, it will be true next week. The author only says, ‘ It’s whispered.’ How delicate of him ! What a perfect gentleman !”

“ Am I really to understand, Mrs. Presty, that Catherine——”

“ You are to understand that Catherine is a widow. I say it with pride, a widow of my making !”

“ If this is one of your jokes, ma’am——”

“ Nothing of the sort, sir.”

“ Are you aware, Mrs. Presty, that my brother——”

“ Oh, don’t talk of your brother ! He’s an obstacle in our way, and we have been compelled to get rid of him.”

Randal drew back a step. Mrs. Presty’s audacity was something more than he could understand. “ Is this woman mad ?” he said to himself.

“ Sit down,” said Mrs. Presty. “ If you are determined to make a serious business of it—if you insist on my justifying myself—you are to be pitied for not possessing a sense of humour, but you shall have your own way. I am put on my defence. Very well. You shall hear how my divorced daughter and my poor little grandchild were treated at Sandyseal, after you left us.”

Having related the circumstances, she suggested that Randal should put himself in Catherine's place, before he ventured on expressing an opinion. "Would you have exposed yourself to be humiliated again in the same way?" she asked. "And would you have seen your child made to suffer as well as yourself?"

"I should have kept in retirement for the future," he answered, "and not have trusted my child and myself among strangers in hotels."

"Ah, indeed? And you would have condemned your poor little daughter to solitude? You would have seen her pining for the company of other children, and would have had no mercy on her? I wonder what you would have done when Captain Bennydeck paid us a visit at the seaside? He was introduced to Mrs.

Norman, and to Mrs. Norman's little girl, and we were all charmed with him. When he and I happened to be left together he naturally wondered, after having seen the beautiful wife, where the lucky husband might be. If he had asked *you* about Mr. Norman, how would you have answered him?"

"I should have told the truth."

"You would have said there was no Mr. Norman?"

"Yes."

"Exactly what I did! And the Captain of course concluded (after having been introduced to Kitty) that Mrs. Norman was a widow. If I had set him right, what would have become of my daughter's reputation? If I had told the truth at this hotel, when everybody wanted to know what Mrs. Norman that handsome lady was — what would the consequences have been

to Catherine and her little girl ? No ! no ! I have made the best of a miserable situation ; I have consulted the tranquillity of a cruelly injured woman and an innocent child—with this inevitable result ; I have been obliged to treat your brother like a character in a novel. I have shipwrecked Herbert as the shortest way of answering inconvenient questions. Vessel found bottom upwards in the middle of the Atlantic, and everybody on board drowned of course. Worse stories have been printed ; I do assure you, worse stories have been printed.”

Randal decided on leaving her. “ Have you done all this with Catherine’s consent ? ” he asked as he got up from his chair.

“ Catherine submits to circumstances, like a sensible woman.”

“ Does she submit to your telling Kitty that her father is dead ? ”

For the first time Mrs. Presty became serious.

“Wait a minute,” she answered. “Before I consented to answer the child’s inquiries, I came to an understanding with the mother. I said, ‘Will you let Kitty see her father again?’”

The very question which Randal had promised to ask in his brother’s interests! “And how did Catherine answer you?” he inquired.

“Honestly. She said: ‘I daren’t!’ After that, I had her mother’s authority for telling Kitty that she would never see her father again. She asked directly if her father was dead——”

“That will do, Mrs. Presty. Your defence is thoroughly worthy of your conduct in all other respects.”

“Say thoroughly worthy of the course

forced upon me and my daughter by your brother's infamous conduct—and you will be nearer the mark!"

Randal passed this over without notice. "Be so good," he said, "as to tell Catherine that I try to make every possible allowance for her, but that I cannot consent to sit at her dinner-table, and that I dare not face my poor little niece, after what I have heard."

Mrs. Presty recovered all her audacity. "A very wise decision," she remarked. "Your sour face would spoil the best dinner that ever was put on the table. Have you any message for Captain Bennydeck?"

Randal asked if his friend was then at the hotel.

Mrs. Presty smiled significantly. "Not at the hotel, just now."

"Where is he?"

“Where he is every day, about this time—out driving with Catherine and Kitty.”

It was a relief to Randal—in the present state of Catherine’s relations towards Bennydeck—to return to London without having seen his friend. He took leave of Mrs. Presty with the formality due to a stranger—he merely bowed. That incorrigible old woman treated him with affectionate familiarity in return.

“Good-bye, dear Randal. One moment before you go! Will it be of any use if we invite you to the marriage?”

Arrived at the station, Randal found that he must wait for the train. While he was walking up and down the platform, with a mind doubly distressed by anxiety about his brother and anxiety about Sydney, the train from London came in. He stood, looking absently at the passengers leaving the

carriages on the opposite side of the platform. Suddenly, a voice that he knew was audible, asking the way to Buck's Hotel. He crossed the line in an instant, and found himself face to face with Herbert.

CHAPTER XLI.

MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

FOR a moment the two men looked at each other without speaking. Herbert's wondering eyes accurately reflected his brother's astonishment.

“What are you doing here?” he asked. Suspicion overclouded his face as he put the question. “You have been to the hotel?” he burst out; “you have seen Catherine?”

Randal could deny that he had seen Catherine, with perfect truth—and did deny it in the plainest terms. Herbert was satisfied. “In all my remembrance of

you," he said, " you have never told me a lie. We have both seen the same newspaper, of course—and you have been the first to clear the thing up. That's it, isn't it?"

" Yes."

" I wonder who this other Mrs. Norman is ; did you find out?"

" No."

" She's not Catherine, at any rate ; I, for one, shall go home with a lighter heart." He took his brother's arm, to return to the other platform. " Do you know, Randal, I was almost afraid that Catherine was the woman. The devil take the thing, and the people who write in it!"

He snatched a newspaper out of his pocket as he spoke—tore it in half—and threw it away. " Malcolm meant well, poor fellow," he said, referring to the old

servant, "but he made a miserable man of me for all that."

Not satisfied with gossip in private, the greedy public appetite devours gossip in print, and wants more of it than any one editor can supply. Randal picked up the torn newspaper. It was not the newspaper which he had bought at the station. Herbert had been reading a rival journal, devoted to the interests of Society—in which the report of Mrs. Norman's marriage was repeated, with this difference, that it boldly alluded to Captain Bennydeck by name. "Did Malcolm give you this?" Randal asked.

"Yes; he and the servant next door subscribe to take it in; and Malcolm thought it might amuse me. It drove me out of the house and into the railway. If it had driven me out of my mind, I shouldn't have been surprised."

“ Gently, Herbert ! Supposing the report had been true——?”

“ After what you have told me, why should I suppose anything of the sort ?”

“ Don’t be angry ; and do pray remember that the Divorce allows you and Catherine to marry again, if you like.”

Herbert became more unreasonable than ever. “ If Catherine does think of marrying again,” he said, “ the man will have to reckon first with me. But that is not the point. You seem to have forgotten that the woman at Buck’s Hotel is described as a Widow. The bare doubt that my divorced wife might be the woman was bad enough—but what I wanted to find out was how she had passed off her false pretence on our child. *That* was what maddened me ! No more of it now. Have you seen Catherine lately ?”

“Not lately.”

“I suppose she is as handsome as ever. When will you ask her to let me see Kitty?”

“Leave that to me,” was the one reply which Randal could venture to make at the moment.

The serious embarrassments that surrounded him were thickening fast. His naturally frank nature urged him to undeceive Herbert. If he followed his inclinations, in the near neighbourhood of the hotel, who could say what disasters might not ensue, in his brother's present frame of mind? If he made the disclosure, on their return to the house, he would be only running the same risk of consequences, after an interval of delay; and, if he remained silent, the march of events might, at any moment, lead to the discovery of

what he had concealed. Add to this, that his confidence in Catherine had been rudely shaken. Having allowed herself to be entrapped into the deception proposed by her mother, and having thus far persevered in that deception, were the chances in favour of her revealing her true position—especially if she was disposed to encourage Bennydeck's suit? Randal's loyalty to Catherine hesitated to decide that serious question against the woman whom he had known, trusted, and admired for so many years. In any event, her second marriage would lead to one disastrous result. It would sooner or later come to Herbert's ears. In the meantime, after what Mrs. Presty had confessed, the cruel falsehood which had checked poor Kitty's natural inquiries raised an insuperable obstacle to a meeting between father and child.

If Randal shrank from the prospect which thus presented itself to him, in his relations with his brother, and if his thoughts reverted to Sydney Westerfield, other reasons for apprehension found their way into his mind.

He had promised to do his best towards persuading Catherine to grant Sydney an interview. To perform that promise appeared to be now simply impossible. Under the exasperating influence of a disappointment for which she was not prepared, it was hard to say what act of imprudence Sydney might not commit. Even the chance of successfully confiding her to Bennydeck's protection, had lost something of its fair promise, since Randal's visit to Sydenham. That the Captain would welcome his friend's daughter as affectionately as if she had been his own

child, was not to be doubted for a moment. But that she would receive the same unremitting attention, while he was courting Catherine, which would have been offered to her under other circumstances, was not to be hoped. Be the results, however, what they might, Randal could see but one plain course before him now. He decided on hastening Sydney's introduction to Bennydeck, and on writing at once to prepare the Captain for that event.

Even this apparently simple proceeding required examination in its different bearings, before he could begin his letter.

Would he be justified in alluding to the report which associated Bennydeck with Catherine? Considerations of delicacy seemed to forbid taking this liberty, even with an intimate friend. It was for the Captain to confirm what Mrs. Presty had

said of him, if he thought it desirable to touch on the subject in his reply. Besides, looking to Catherine's interest—and not forgetting how she had suffered—had Randal any right to regard with other than friendly feelings a second marriage, which united her to a man morally and intellectually the superior of her first husband? What happier future could await her—especially if she justified Randal's past experience of all that was candid and truthful in her character—than to become his friend's wife?

Written under the modifying influence of these conclusions, his letter contained the few words that follow:—

“I have news for you which I am sure you will be glad to hear. Your old friend's daughter has abandoned her sinful way of life, and has made sacrifices which prove

the sincerity of her repentance. Without entering into particulars which may be mercifully dismissed from notice, let me only assure you that I answer for Sydney Westerfield as being worthy of the fatherly interest which you feel in her. Shall I say that she may expect an early visit from you, when I see her to-morrow? I don't doubt that I am free already to do this; but it will encourage the poor girl, if I can speak with your authority."

He added Sydney's address in a post-script, and despatched his letter that evening.

On the afternoon of the next day two letters were delivered to Randal, bearing the Sydenham postmark.

The first which he happened to take up was addressed to him in Mrs. Presty's hand-

writing. His opinion of this correspondent was expressed in prompt action—he threw the letter, unopened, into the waste-paper basket.

The next letter was from Bennydeck, written in the kindest terms, but containing no allusion to any contemplated change in his life. He would not be able (he wrote) to leave Sydenham for a day or two. No explanation of the cause of this delay followed. But it might, perhaps, be excusable to infer that the marriage had not yet been decided on, and that the Captain's proposals were still waiting for Catherine's reply.

Randal put the letter in his pocket, and went at once to Sydney's lodgings.

CHAPTER XLII.

TRY TO EXCUSE HER.

THE weather had been unusually warm. Of all oppressive summers a hot summer in London is the hardest to endure. The little exercise that Sydney could take was, as Randal knew, deferred until the evening. On asking for her, he was surprised to hear that she had gone out.

“Is she walking,” he asked, “on such a day as this?”

No : she was too much overcome by the heat to be able to walk. The landlady’s boy had been sent to fetch a cab, and he

had heard Miss Westerfield tell the driver to go to Lincoln's Inn Fields.

The address at once reminded Randal of Mr. Sarrazin. On the chance of making a discovery, he went to the lawyer's office. It had struck him as being just possible that Sydney might have called there for the second time ; and, on making inquiry, he found that his surmise was correct. Miss Westerfield had called, and had gone away again more than an hour since.

Having mentioned this circumstance, good Mr. Sarrazin rather abruptly changed the subject.

He began to talk of the weather, and, like everybody else, he complained of the heat. Receiving no encouragement so far, he selected politics as his next topic. Randal was unapproachably indifferent to the state of parties, and the urgent necessity

for reform. Still bent, as it seemed, on preventing his visitor from taking a leading part in the conversation, Mr. Sarrazin tried the exercise of hospitality next. He opened his cigar-case, and entered eagerly into the merits of his cigars; he proposed a cool drink, and described the right method of making it as distinguished from the wrong. Randal was not thirsty, and was not inclined to smoke. Would the pertinacious lawyer give way at last? In appearance, at least, he submitted to defeat. "You want something of me, my friend," he said, with a patient smile. "What is it?"

"I want to know why Miss Westerfield called on you."

Randal flattered himself that he had made a prevaricating reply simply impossible. Nothing of the sort! Mr. Sarrazin slipped through his fingers once

more. The unwritten laws of gallantry afforded him a refuge now.

“The most inviolable respect,” he solemnly declared, “is due to a lady’s confidence—and, what is more, to a young lady’s confidence—and, what is more yet, to a pretty young lady’s confidence. The sex, my dear fellow! Must I recall your attention to what is due to the sex?”

This little outbreak of the foreign side of his friend’s character was no novelty to Randal. He remained as indifferent to the inviolate claims of the sex as if he had been an old man of ninety.

“Did Miss Westerfield say anything about me?” was his next question.

Slippery Mr. Sarrazin slid into another refuge: he entered a protest.

“Here is a change of persons and places!” he exclaimed. “Am I a witness

in a court of justice—and are you the lawyer who examines me? My memory is defective, my learned friend. *Non mi ricordo.* I know nothing about it.”

Randal changed his tone. “We have amused ourselves long enough,” he said. “I have serious reasons, Sarrazin, for wishing to know what passed between Miss Westerfield and you—and I trust my old friend to relieve my anxiety.”

The lawyer was accustomed to say of himself that he never did things by halves. His answer to Randal offered a proof of his accurate estimate of his own character.

“Your old friend will deserve your confidence in him,” he answered. “You want to know why Miss Westerfield called here. Her object in view was to twist me round her finger—and I beg to inform you that she has completely succeeded. My dear

Randal, this pretty creature's cunning is remarkable, even for a woman. I am an old lawyer, skilled in the ways of the world—and a young girl has completely overreached me. She asked—oh, heavens, how innocently!—if Mrs. Norman was likely to make a long stay at her present place of residence.”

Randal interrupted him. “You don't mean to tell me you have given her Catherine's address?”

“Buck's Hotel, Sydenham,” Mr. Sarrazin answered. “She has got the address down in her nice little pocket-book.”

“What amazing weakness!” Randal exclaimed.

Mr. Sarrazin cordially agreed with him. “Amazing weakness, as you say. Pretty Miss Sydney has extracted more things, besides ~~the address~~. She knows that Mrs.

Norman is here on business relating to new investments of her money. She knows besides that one of the trustees is keeping us waiting. She also made sensible remarks. She mentioned having heard Mrs. Norman say that the air of London never agreed with her; and she hoped that a comparatively healthy neighbourhood had been chosen for Mrs. Norman's place of residence. This, you see, was leading up to the discovery of the address. The spirit of mischief possessed me; I allowed Miss Westerfield to take a little peep at the truth. 'Mrs. Norman is not actually in London,' I said; 'she is only in the neighbourhood.' For what followed on this, my experience of ladies ought to have prepared me. I am ashamed to say *this* lady took me completely by surprise."

"What did she do?"

“Fell on her knees, poor dear—and said, ‘Oh, Mr. Sarrazin, be kinder to me than you have ever been yet; tell me where Mrs. Norman is!’—I put her back in her chair, and I took her handkerchief out of her pocket and I wiped her eyes.”

“And then you told her the address?”

“I was near it, but I didn’t do it yet. I asked what you had done in the matter. Alas, your kind heart has led you to promise more than you could perform. She had waited to hear from you if Mrs. Norman consented to see her, and had waited in vain. Hard on her, wasn’t it? I was sorry, but I was still obdurate. I only felt the symptoms which warned me that I was going to make a fool of myself, when she let me into her secret for the first time, and said plainly what she wanted with Mrs. Norman. Her tears and her entreaties I

had resisted. The confession of her motives overpowered me. It is right," cried Mr. Sarrazin, suddenly warming into enthusiasm, "that these two women should meet. Remember how that poor girl has proved that her repentance is no sham. I say, she has a right to tell, and the lady whom she has injured has a right to hear, what she has done to atone for the past, what confession she is willing to make to the one woman in the world (though she is a divorced woman) who is most interested in hearing what Miss Westerfield's life has been with that wretched brother of yours. Ah, yes, I know what the English cant may say. Away with the English cant ! it is the worst obstacle to the progress of the English nation !"

Randal listened absently : he was thinking.

There could be little doubt to what destination Sydney Westerfield had betaken herself, when she left the lawyer's office. At that moment, perhaps, she and Catherine were together—and together alone.

Mr. Sarrazin had noticed his friend's silence. "Is it possible you don't agree with me?" he asked.

"I don't feel as hopefully as you do, if these two ladies meet."

"Ah, my friend, you are not a sanguine man by nature. If Mrs. Norman treats our poor Sydney just as a commonplace ill-tempered woman would treat her, I shall be surprised indeed. Say, if you like, that she will be insulted—of this I am sure, she will not return it; there is no expiation that is too bitter to be endured by that resolute little creature. Her fine nature has been tempered by adversity. A hard

life has been Sydney's, depend upon it, in the years before you and I met with her. Good Heavens ! What would my wife say if she heard me ? The women are nice, but they have their drawbacks. Let us wait till to-morrow, my dear boy ; and let us believe in Sydney without allowing our wives—I beg your pardon, I mean *my* wife—to suspect in what forbidden direction our sympathies are leading us. Oh, for shame !”

Who could persist in feeling depressed in the company of such a man as this ? Randal went home with the influence of Mr. Sarrazin's sanguine nature in undisturbed possession of him, until his old servant's gloomy face confronted him at the door.

“ Anything gone wrong, Malcolm ? ”

“ I'm sorry to say, sir, Mr. Herbert has left us.”

“Left us! Why?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“Where has he gone?”

“He didn’t tell me.”

“Is there no letter? No message?”

“There’s a message, sir. Mr. Herbert came back——”

“Stop! Where had he been when he came back?”

“He said he felt a little lonely after you went out, and he thought it might cheer him up if he went to the club. I was to tell you where he had gone if you asked what had become of him. He said it kindly and pleasantly—quite like himself, sir. But, when he came back—if you’ll excuse my saying so—I never saw a man in a worse temper. ‘Tell my brother I am obliged to him for his hospitality, and I won’t take advantage of it any longer.’

That was Mr. Herbert's message. I tried to say a word. He banged the door, and away he went."

Even Randal's patient and gentle nature rose in revolt against his brother's treatment of him. He entered his sitting-room in silence. Malcolm followed, and pointed to a letter on the table. "I think you must have thrown it away by mistake, sir," the old man explained; "I found it in the waste-paper basket." He bowed with the unfailing respect of the old school, and withdrew.

Randal's first resolve was to dismiss his brother from further consideration. "Kindness is thrown away on Herbert," he thought; "I shall treat him for the future as he has treated me."

But his brother was still in his mind. He opened Mrs. Presty's letter—on the

chance that it might turn the current of his thoughts in a new direction.

In spite of Mrs. Presty, in spite of himself, his heart softened towards the man who had behaved so badly to him. Instead of reading the letter, he was now trying to discover a connection between his brother's visit to the club and his brother's angry message. Had Herbert heard something said, among gossiping members in the smoking-room, which might account for his conduct? If Randal had belonged to the club he would have gone there to make inquiries. How could he get the information that he wanted, in some other way?

After considering for awhile, he remembered the dinner that he had given to his friend Sarrazin on his return from the United States, and the departure of the

lawyer to his club, with a purpose in view which interested them both. It was the same club to which Herbert belonged. Randal wrote at once to Mr. Sarrazin, mentioning what had happened, and acknowledging the anxiety that weighed on his mind.

Having instructed Malcolm to take the letter to the lawyer's house, and, if he was not at home, to inquire where he might be found, Randal adopted the readiest means of composing himself, in the servant's absence, by lighting his pipe.

He was enveloped in clouds of tobacco-smoke—the only clouds which we can trust never to prove unworthy of our confidence in them—when Mrs. Presty's letter caught his attention. If the month had been January instead of July, he would have thrown it into the fire. Under present

circumstances he took it up and read it :—

“I bear no malice, dear Randal, and I write to you as affectionately as if you had kept your temper on the occasion when we last met.

“You will be pleased to hear that Catherine was as thoroughly distressed as you could wish her to be, when it became my disagreeable duty to mention what had passed between us, by way of accounting for your absence. She was quite unable to rally her spirits, even with dear Captain Bennydeck present to encourage her.

“‘I am not receiving you as I ought,’ she said to him, when we began dinner, ‘but there is perhaps some excuse for me. I have lost the regard and esteem of an old friend, who has cruelly wronged me.’ From

motives of delicacy (which I don't expect you to understand) she refrained from mentioning your name. The prettiest answer that I ever heard was the answer that the Captain returned. 'Let the true friend,' he said, 'take the place in your heart which the false friend has lost.'

"He kissed her hand. If you had seen how he did it, and how she looked at him, you would have felt that you had done more towards persuading my daughter to marry the Captain, than any other person about her, myself included. You had deserted her; you had thrown her back on the one friend left. Thank you, Randal. In our best interests, thank you.

"It is needless to add that I got out of the way, and took Kitty with me, at the earliest opportunity—and left them by themselves.

“At bed-time I went into Catherine’s room. Our interview began and ended in less than a minute. It was useless to ask if the Captain had proposed marriage ; her agitation sufficiently informed me of what had happened. My one question was : ‘Dearest Catherine, have you said Yes?’ She turned shockingly pale, and answered : ‘I have not said No.’ Could anything be more encouraging ? God bless you ; we shall meet at the wedding.”

Randal laid down the letter, and filled his pipe again. He was not in the least exasperated ; he was only anxious to hear from Mr. Sarrazin. If Mrs. Presty had seen him at that moment, she would have said to herself : “I forgot the wretch was a smoker.”

In half an hour more the door was opened by Malcolm, and Mr. Sarrazin in person answered his friend.

“ There are no such incorrigible gossips,” he said, “ as men in the smoking-room of a club. Those popular newspapers began the mischief, and the editor of one of them completed it. How he got his information I am not able to say. The small-talk turned on that report about the charming widow ; and the editor congratulated himself on the delicacy of his conduct. ‘ When the paragraph reached me,’ he said, ‘ the writer mentioned that Mrs. Norman was that well-known lady, the divorced Mrs. Herbert Linley. I thought this rather too bad, and I cut it out.’ Your brother appears to have been present—but he seldom goes to the club, and none of the

members knew him even by sight. Shall I give you a light? Your pipe's out."

Randal's feelings, at that moment, were not within reach of the comforting influence of tobacco.

"Do you think your brother has gone to Sydenham?" Mr. Sarrazin asked.

Randal answered: "I haven't a doubt of it now."

CHAPTER XLIII.

KNOW YOUR OWN MIND.

THE garden of the hotel at Sydenham had originally belonged to a private house. Of great extent, it had been laid out in excellent taste. Flower-beds and lawns, a handsome fountain, seats shaded by groups of fine trees at their full growth, completed the pastoral charm of the place. A winding path led across the garden from the back of the house. It had been continued by the speculator who purchased the property, until it reached a road at the extremity of the grounds which communicated with the Crystal Palace. Visitors

to the hotel had such pleasant associations with the garden that many of them returned at future opportunities, instead of trying the attraction of some other place. Various tastes and different ages found their wishes equally consulted here. Children rejoiced in the finest playground they had ever seen. Remote walks, secluded among shrubberies, invited persons of reserved disposition who came as strangers, and as strangers desired to remain. The fountain and the lawn collected sociable visitors, who were always ready to make acquaintance with each other. Even the amateur artist could take liberties with Nature, and find the accommodating limits of the garden sufficient for his purpose. Trees in the foreground sat to him for likenesses that were never recognised ; and hills submitted to unprovoked familiarities,

on behalf of brushes which were not daunted by distance.

On the day after the dinner which had so deplorably failed, in respect of one of the guests invited, to fulfil Catherine's anticipations, there was a festival at the Palace. It had proved so generally attractive to the guests at the hotel that the grounds were almost deserted.

As the sun declined, on a lovely summer evening, the few invalids feebly wandering about the flower-beds, or resting under the trees, began to return to the house in dread of the dew. Catherine and her child, with the nursemaid in attendance, were left alone in the garden. Kitty found her mother, as she openly declared, "not such good company as usual." Since the day when her grandmother had said the fatal words which checked all further

allusion to her father, the child had shown a disposition to complain, if she was not constantly amused. She complained of Mrs. Presty now.

“I think Grandmamma might have taken me to the Crystal Palace,” she said.

“My dear, your Grandmamma has friends with her—ladies and gentlemen who don’t care to be troubled with a child.”

Kitty received this information in a very unamiable spirit. “I hate ladies and gentlemen!” she said.

“Even Captain Bennydeck?” her mother asked.

“No; I like my nice Captain. And I like the waiters. They would take me to the Crystal Palace—only they’re always busy. I wish it was bed-time; I don’t know what to do with myself.”

“Take a little walk with Susan.”

“Where shall I go?”

Catherine looked towards the gate which opened on the road, and proposed a visit to the old man who kept the lodge.

Kitty shook her head. There was an objection to the old man. “He asks questions; he wants to know how I get on with my sums. He’s proud of his summing; and he finds me out when I’m wrong. I don’t like the lodge-keeper.”

Catherine looked the other way, towards the house. The pleasant fall of water in the basin of the distant fountain was just audible. “Go and feed the gold-fishes,” she suggested.

This was a prospect of amusement which at once raised Kitty’s spirits. “That’s the thing!” she cried, and ran off to the fountain, with the nursemaid after her.

Catherine seated herself under the trees, and watched in solitude the decline of the sun in a cloudless sky. The memory of the happy years of her marriage had never been so sadly and persistently present to her mind as at this time, when the choice of another married life waited her decision to become an accomplished fact. Remembrances of the past, which she had such bitter reason to regret, and forebodings of the future, in which she was more than half inclined to believe, oppressed her at one and the same moment. She thought of the different circumstances, so widely separated by time, under which Herbert (years ago) and Bennydeck (twenty-four hours since) had each owned his love, and pleaded for an indulgent hearing. Her mind contrasted the dissimilar results.

Pressed by the faithless man who had

so cruelly wronged her in after years, she only wondered why he had waited so long before he asked her to marry him. Addressed with equal ardour by that other man, whose age, whose character, whose modest devotion offered her every assurance of happiness that a woman could desire, she had struggled against herself, and had begged him to give her a day to consider. That day was now drawing to an end. As she watched the setting sun, the phantom of her guilty husband darkened the heavenly light ; embittered the distrust of herself which made her afraid to say Yes ; and left her helpless before the hesitation which prevented her from saying No.

The figure of a man appeared on the lonely path that led to the lodge gate.

Impulsively, she rose from her seat as he advanced. Impulsively, she sat down again.

After that first act of indecision, the flutter of her spirits abated ; she was able to think.

To avoid him, after he had spared her at her own request, would have been an act of ingratitude : to receive him was to place herself once more in the false position of a woman too undecided to know her own mind. Forced to choose between these alternatives, her true regard for Bennydeck forbade her to think of herself, and encouraged her to wait for him. As he came nearer, she saw anxiety in his face, and observed an open letter in his hand. He smiled as he approached her, and asked leave to take a chair at her side. At the same time, when he perceived that she had noticed his letter, he put it away hurriedly in his pocket.

“I hope nothing has happened to annoy you,” she said.

He smiled again ; and asked if she was thinking of his letter. “It is only a report,” he added, “from my second in command, whom I have left in charge of my Home. He is an excellent man ; but I am afraid his temper is not proof against the ingratitude which we sometimes meet with. He doesn’t yet make allowances for what even the best natures suffer, under the deteriorating influence of self-distrust and despair. No, I am not anxious about the result of this case. I forget all my anxieties (except one) when I am with you.”

His eyes told her that he was about to return to the one subject that she dreaded. She tried—as women will try, in the little emergencies of their lives—to gain time.

“I am interested about your Home,”

she said: "I want to know what sort of place it is. Is the discipline very severe?"

"There is no discipline," he answered warmly. "My one object is to be a friend to my friendless fellow-creatures; and my one way of governing them is to follow the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Whatever else I may remind them of, when they come to me, I am determined not to remind them of a prison. For this reason—though I pity the hardened wanderers of the streets, I don't open my doors to them. Many a refuge, in which discipline is inevitable, is open to these poor sinners already. My welcome is offered to penitents and sufferers of another kind—who have fallen from positions in life, in which the sense of honour has been cultivated; whose despair is associated with remem-

branches which I may so encourage, with the New Testament to help me, as to lead them back to the religious influences under which their purer and happier lives may have been passed. Here and there, I meet with disappointments. But I persist in my system of trusting them as freely as if they were my own children; and, for the most part, they justify my confidence in them. On the day—if it ever comes—when I find discipline necessary, I shall suffer my disappointment and close my doors.”

“Is your house open,” Catherine asked, “to men and women alike?”

He was eager to speak with her on a subject more interesting to him even than his Home. Answering her question, in this frame of mind, his thoughts wandered: he drew lines absently with his walking-stick on the soft earth under the trees.

“The means at my disposal,” he said, “are limited. I have been obliged to choose between the men and the women.”

“And you have chosen women?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“Because a lost woman is a more friendless creature than a lost man.”

“Do they come to you? or do you look for them?”

“They mostly come to me. There is one young woman, however, now waiting to see me, whom I have been looking for. I am deeply interested in her.”

“Is it her beauty that interests you?”

“I have not seen her since she was a child. She is the daughter of an old friend of mine, who died many years ago.”

“And with that claim on you, you keep her waiting?”

“ Yes.”

He let his stick drop on the ground, and looked at Catherine ; but he offered no explanation of his strange conduct. She was a little disappointed. “ You have been some time away from your Home,” she said ; still searching for his reasons. “ When do you go back ?”

“ I go back,” he answered, “ when I know whether I may thank God for being the happiest man living.”

They were both silent.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THINK OF CONSEQUENCES.

CATHERINE listened to the fall of water in the basin of the fountain. She was conscious of a faint hope—a hope unworthy of her—that Kitty might get weary of the gold-fishes, and might interrupt them. No such thing happened; no stranger appeared on the path which wound through the garden. She was alone with him. The influences of the still and fragrant summer evening were influences which breathed of love.

“Have you thought of me since yesterday?” he asked gently.

She owned that she had thought of him.

“Is there no hope that your heart will ever incline towards me?”

“I daren’t consult my heart. If I had only to consider my own feelings——” She stopped.

“What else have you to consider?”

“My past life—how I have suffered, and what I have to repent of.”

“Has your married life not been a happy one?” he asked.

“Not a happy one—in the end,” she answered.

“Through no fault of yours, I am sure?”

“Through no fault of mine, certainly.”

“And yet you said just now that you had something to repent of?”

“I was not thinking of my husband, Captain Bennydeck, when I said that.

If I have injured any person, the person is myself."

She was thinking of that fatal concession to the advice of her mother, and to the interests of her child, which placed her in a false position towards the honest man who loved her and trusted her. If he had been less innocent in the ways of the world, and not so devotedly fond of her, he might, little by little, have persuaded Catherine to run the risk of shocking him by a confession of the truth. As it was, his confidence in her raised him high above the reach of suspicions which might have occurred to other men. He saw her turn pale ; he saw distress in her face, which he interpreted as a silent reproach to him for the questions that he had asked.

"I hope you will forgive me ?" he said simply.

She was astonished. "What have I to forgive?"

"My want of delicacy."

"Oh, Captain Bennydeck, you speak of one of your great merits as if it was a fault! Over and over again I have noticed your delicacy, and admired it."

He was too deeply in earnest to abandon his doubts of himself.

"I have ignorantly led you to think of your sorrows," he said; "sorrows that I cannot console. I don't deserve to be forgiven. May I make the one excuse in my power? May I speak of myself?"

She told him by a gesture that he had made a needless request.

"The life I have led," he resumed, "accounts perhaps, in some degree, for what is deficient in me. At school, I was not a popular boy; I only made one friend,

and he has long since been numbered with the dead. Of my life at college, and afterwards in London, I dare not speak to you ; I look back at it with horror. My school-friend decided my choice of a profession ; he went into the navy. After awhile, not knowing what else to do, I followed his example. I liked the life—I may say the sea saved me. For years, I was never on shore for more than a few weeks at a time. I saw nothing of society ; I was hardly ever in the company of ladies. The next change in my life associated me with an Arctic expedition. God forbid I should tell you of what men go through who are lost in the regions of eternal ice ! Let me only say I was preserved—miraculously preserved—to profit by that dreadful experience. It made a new man of me ; it altered me (I hope for the better) into what I am now.

Oh, I feel that I ought to have kept my secret yesterday—I mean my daring to love you. I should have waited till you knew more of me ; till my conduct pleased you perhaps, and spoke for me. You won't laugh, I am sure, if I confess (at my age !) that I am inexperienced. Never till I met you have I known what true love is—and this at forty years old. How some people would laugh ! I own it seems melancholy to me."

"No ; not melancholy."

Her voice trembled. Agitation, which it was not a pain but a luxury to feel, was gently taking possession of her. Where another man might have seen that her tenderness was getting the better of her discretion, and might have presumed on the discovery, this man, innocently blind to his own interests, never even attempted to

take advantage of her. No more certain way could have been devised, by the most artful lover, of touching the heart of a generous woman, and making it his own. The influence exerted over Catherine by the virtues of Bennydeck's character—his unaffected kindness, his manly sympathy, his religious convictions so deeply felt, so modestly restrained from claiming notice—had been steadily increasing in the intimacy of daily intercourse. Catherine had never felt his ascendancy over her as strongly as she felt it now. By fine degrees, the warning remembrances which had hitherto made her hesitate, lost their hold on her memory. Hardly conscious herself of what she was doing, she began to search his feelings in his own presence. . Such love as his had been unknown in her experience ; the luxury of looking into it, and sounding it to its

inmost depths, was more than the woman's nature could resist.

“ I think you hardly do yourself justice,” she said. “ Surely you don't regret having felt for me so truly, when I told you yesterday that my old friend had deserted me ?”

“ No, indeed !”

“ Do you like to remember that you showed no jealous curiosity to know who my friend was ?”

“ I should have been ashamed of myself if I had asked the question.”

“ And did you believe that I had a good motive—a motive which you might yourself have appreciated—for not telling you the name of that friend ?”

“ Is he some one whom I know ?”

“ Qught you to ask me that, after what I have just said ?”

“Pray forgive me! I spoke without thinking.”

“I can hardly believe it, when I remember how you spoke to me yesterday. I could never have supposed, before we became acquainted with each other, that it was in the nature of a man to understand me so perfectly, to be so gentle and so considerate in feeling for my distress. You confused me a little, I must own, by what you said afterwards. But I am not sure that I ought to be severe in blaming you. Sympathy—I mean such sympathy as yours—sometimes says more than discretion can always approve. Have you not found it so yourself?”

“I have found it so with you.”

“And perhaps I have shown a little too plainly how dependent I am on you—how dreadful it would be to me if I lost you too as a friend?”

She blushed as she said it. When the words had escaped her, she felt that they might bear another meaning than the simple meaning which she had attached to them. He took her hand ; his doubts of himself, his needless fear of offending her, restrained him no longer.

“ You can never lose me,” he said, “ if you will only let me be the nearest friend that a woman can have. Bear with me, dearest ! I ask for so much ; I have so little to offer in return. I dream of a life with you which is perhaps too perfectly happy to be enjoyed on earth. And yet, I cannot resign my delusion. Must my poor heart always long for happiness which is beyond my reach ? If an overruling Providence guides our course through this world, may we not sometimes hope for happier ends than our mortal eyes can see ?”

He waited a moment—and sighed—and dropped her hand. She hid her face; she knew what it would tell him; she was ashamed to let him see it.

“I didn’t mean to distress you,” he said sadly.

She let him see her face. For a moment only, she looked at him—and then let silence tell him the rest.

His arms closed round her. Slowly, the glory of the sun faded from the heavens, and the soft summer twilight fell over the earth. “I can’t speak,” he whispered; “my happiness is too much for me.”

“Are you sure of your happiness?” she asked.

“Could I think as I am thinking now, if I were not sure of it?”

“Are you thinking of *me*?”

“Of you—and of all that you will be to

me in the future. Oh, my angel, if God grants us many years to come, what a perfect life I see !”

“ Tell me—what do you see ?”

“ I see a husband and wife who are all in all to each other. If friends come to us, we are glad to bid them welcome ; but we are always happiest by ourselves.”

“ Do we live in retirement ?”

“ We live where you like best to live. Shall it be in the country ?”

“ Yes ! yes ! You have spoken of the sea as you might have spoken of your best friend—we will be near the sea. But I must not keep you selfishly all to myself. I must remember how good you have been to poor creatures who don’t feel our happiness, and who need your kindness. Perhaps I might help you ? Do you doubt it ?”

“ I only doubt whether I ought to let you

see what I have seen ; I am only afraid of the risk of making you unhappy. You tempt me to run the risk. The help of a woman—and of such a woman as you are—is the one thing I have wanted. Your influence would succeed where my influence has often failed. How good, how thoughtful you would be !”

“ I only want to be worthy of you,” she said, humbly. “ When may I see your Home ?”

He drew her closer to him : tenderly and timidly he kissed her for the first time. “ It rests with you,” he answered. “ When will you be my wife ?”

She hesitated ; he felt her trembling. “ Is there any obstacle ?” he asked.

Before she could reply, Kitty’s voice was heard calling to her mother—Kitty ran up to them.

Catherine turned cold as the child caught her by the hand, eagerly claiming her attention. All that she should have remembered, all that she had forgotten in a few bright minutes of illusion, rose in judgment against her, and struck her mind prostrate in an instant, when she felt Kitty's touch.

Bennydeck saw the change. Was it possible that the child's sudden appearance had startled her? Kitty had something to say, and said it before he could speak.

"Mamma, I want to go where the other children are going. Susan's gone to her supper. You take me."

Her mother was not even listening. Kitty turned impatiently to Bennydeck. "Why won't Mamma speak to me?" she asked. He quieted her by a word. "You shall go with me." His anxiety about Catherine was more than he could endure.

“Pray let me take you back to the house,” he said. “I am afraid you are not well.”

“I shall be better directly. Do me a kindness—take the child.”

She spoke faintly and vacantly. Bennydeck hesitated. She lifted her trembling hands in entreaty. “I beg you will leave me!” Her voice, her manner, made it impossible to disobey. He turned resignedly to Kitty, and asked which way she wanted to go. The child pointed down the path to one of the towers of the Crystal Palace, visible in the distance. “The governess has taken the others to see the company go away,” she said; “I want to go too.”

Bennydeck looked back before he lost sight of Catherine.

She remained seated, in the attitude in which he had left her. At the farther end

of the path which led to the hotel, he thought he saw a figure in the twilight, approaching from the house. There would be help near, if Catherine wanted it.

His uneasy mind was in some degree relieved, as he and Kitty left the garden together.

CHAPTER XLV.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES.

SHE tried to think of Bennydeck.

Her eyes followed him as long as he was in sight, but her thoughts wandered. To look at him now was to look at the little companion walking by his side. Still, the child reminded her of the living father ; still, the child innocently tortured her with the consciousness of deceit. The faithless man from whom the law had released her, possessed himself of her thoughts, in spite of the law. He, and he only, was the visionary companion of her solitude when she was left by herself.

Did he remind her of the sin that he had committed?—of the insult that he had inflicted on the woman whom he had vowed to love and cherish? No! he recalled to her the years of love that she had passed by his side; he upbraided her with the happiness which she had owed to him, in the prime and glory of her life. Woman! set *that* against the wrong which I have done to you. You have the right to condemn me, and Society has the right to condemn me—but I am your child's father still. Forget me if you can!

All thought will bear the test of solitude, excepting only the thought that finds its origin in hopeless self-reproach. The soft mystery of twilight, the solemn silence of the slowly-coming night, daunted Catherine in that lonely place. She rose to return to light and human beings. As she set

her face towards the house, a discovery confronted her. She was not alone.

A woman was standing on the path, apparently looking at her.

In the dim light, and at the distance between them, recognition of the woman was impossible. She neither moved nor spoke. Strained to their utmost point of tension, Catherine's nerves quivered at the sight of that shadowy solitary figure. She dropped back on the seat. In tones that trembled she said : " Who are you ? What do you want ? "

The voice that answered was, like her own voice, faint with fear. It said : " I want a word with you. "

Moving slowly forward — stopping — moving onward again — hesitating again — the woman at last approached. There was light enough left to reveal her face, now that

she was near. It was the face of Sydney Westerfield.

The survival of childhood, in the mature human being, betrays itself most readily in the sex that bears children. The chances and changes of life show the child's mobility of emotion constantly associating itself with the passions of the woman. At the moment of recognition, the troubled mind of Catherine was instantly steadied, under the influence of that coarsest sense which levels us with the animals—the sense of anger.

“I am amazed at your audacity,” she said.

There was no resentment — there was only patient submission in Sydney's reply.

“Twice I have approached the house in which you are living; and twice my courage has failed me. I have gone away again—I have walked, I don't know where,

I don't know how far. Shame and fear seemed to be insensible to fatigue. This is my third attempt. If I was a little nearer to you, I think you would see what the effort has cost me. I have not much to say. May I ask you to hear me?"

"You have taken me by surprise, Miss Westerfield. You have no right to do that; I refuse to hear you."

"Try, Madam, to bear in mind that no unhappy creature, in my place, would expose herself to your anger and contempt without a serious reason. Will you think again?"

"No!"

Sydney turned to go away—and suddenly stopped.

Another person was advancing from the hotel; an interruption, a trivial domestic interruption, presented itself. The nurse-

maid had missed the child, and had come into the garden to see if she was with her mother.

“Where is Miss Kitty, Ma’am?” the girl asked.

Her mistress told her what had happened, and sent her to the Palace to relieve Captain Bennydeck of the charge that he had undertaken. Susan listened, looking at Sydney, and recognising the familiar face. As the girl moved away, Sydney spoke to her.

“I hope little Kitty is well and happy?”

The mother does not live who could have resisted the tone in which that question was put. The broken heart, the love for the child that still lived in it, spoke in accents that even touched the servant. She came back; remembering the happy days when the governess had won their hearts at

Mount Morven, and, for a moment at least, remembering nothing else.

“Quite well and happy, Miss, thank you,” Susan said.

As she hurried away on her errand, she saw her mistress beckon to Sydney to return, and place a chair for her. The nursemaid was not near enough to hear what followed.

“Miss Westerfield, will you forget what I said just now?” With those words, Catherine pointed to the chair. “I am ready to hear you,” she resumed,—“but I have something to ask first. Does what you wish to say to me relate only to yourself?”

“It relates to another person, as well as to myself.”

That reply, and the inference to which it led, tried Catherine’s resolution to preserve

her self-control, as nothing had tried it yet.

“If that other person,” she began, “means Mr. Herbert Linley——”

Sydney interrupted her, in words which she was entirely unprepared to hear.

“I shall never see Mr. Herbert Linley again.”

“Has he deserted you?”

“No. It is *I* who have left *him*.”

“You!”

The emphasis laid on that one word forced Sydney to assert herself for the first time.

“If I had not left him of my own free will,” she said, “what else would excuse me for venturing to come here?”

Catherine’s sense of justice felt the force of that reply. At the same time, her sense of injury set its own construction on

Sydney's motive. "Has his cruelty driven you away from him?" she asked.

"If he had been cruel to me," Sydney answered, "do you think I should have come here to complain of it to You? Do me the justice to believe that I am not capable of such self-degradation as that. I have nothing to complain of."

"And yet you have left him?"

"He has been all that is kind and considerate: he has done everything that a man in his unhappy position could do to set my mind at ease. And yet I have left him. Oh, I claim no merit for my repentance, bitterly as I feel it! I might not have had the courage to leave him—if he had loved me as he once loved you."

"Miss Westerfield! You are the last person living who ought to allude to my married life."

“ You may perhaps pardon the allusion, Madam, when you have heard what I have still to say. I owe it to Mr. Herbert Linley, if not to you, to confess that his life with me has *not* been a life of happiness. He has tried, compassionately tried, to keep his secret sorrow from discovery, and he has failed. I had long suspected the truth ; but I only saw it in his face, when he found the book you left behind you at the hotel. Your image has, from first to last, been the one living image in his guilty heart. I am the miserable victim of a man’s passing fancy. You have been, you are still, the one object of a husband’s love. Ask your own heart if the woman lives who could say to you, what I have just said—unless she knew it to be true.”

Catherine’s head sank on her bosom ;

her helpless hands lay trembling on her lap. Overpowered by the confession which she had just heard—a confession which had followed closely on the thoughts inspired by the appearance of the child—her agitation was beyond control ; her mind was unequal to the effort of decision. The woman who had been wronged—who had the right to judge for herself, and to speak for herself—was the silent woman of the two !

It was not quite dark yet. Sydney could see as well as hear.

For the first time since the beginning of the interview, she allowed the impulse of the moment to lead her astray. In her eagerness to complete the act of atonement, she failed to appreciate the severity of the struggle that was passing in Catherine's mind. She alluded again to Herbert Linley, and she spoke too soon.

“Will you let him ask your pardon?” she said. “He expects no more.”

Catherine’s spirit was roused in an instant. “He expects too much!” she answered sternly. “Is he here by your connivance? Is he, too, waiting to take me by surprise?”

“I am incapable, Madam, of taking such a liberty with you as that; I may perhaps have hoped to be able to tell him, by writing, of a different reception——” She checked herself. “I beg your pardon, if I have ventured to hope. I dare not ask you to alter your opinion——”

“Do you dare to look the truth in the face?” Catherine interposed. “Do you remember what sacred ties that man has broken? what memories he has profaned? what years of faithful love he has cast from him? Must I tell you how he poisoned

his wife's mind with doubts of his truth and despair of his honour, when he basely deserted her? You talk of your repentance. Does your repentance forget that he would still have been my blameless husband but for You?"

Sidney silently submitted to reproach, silently endured the shame that finds no excuse for itself.

Catherine looked at her and relented. The noble nature which could stoop to anger, but never sink to the lower depths of malice and persecution, restrained itself and made amends. "I say it in no unkindness to you," she resumed. "But when you ask me to forgive, consider what you ask me to forget. It will only distress us both if we remain longer together," she continued, rising as she spoke, "Perhaps you will believe that I mean well,

when I ask if there is anything I can do for you ?”

“ Nothing !”

All the desolation of the lost woman told its terrible tale in that one word. Invited to rest herself in the hotel, she asked leave to remain where she was ; the mere effort of rising was too much for her now. Catherine said the parting words kindly. “ I believe in your good intentions ; I believe in your repentance.”

“ Believe in my punishment !” After that reply, no more was said.

Behind the trees that closed the view at the farther extremity of the lawn, the moon was rising. As the two women lost sight of each other, the new light, pure and beautiful, began to dawn over the garden.

CHAPTER XLVI.

NIL DESPERANDUM.

No horror of her solitude, no melancholy recollections, no dread of the future disturbed Sydney's mind. The one sense left in her was the sense of fatigue. Vacantly, mechanically, the girl rested as a tired animal might have rested. She saw nothing, heard nothing; the one feeling of which she was conscious was a dull aching in every limb. The moon climbed the heavens, brightened the topmost leaves of the trees, found the gloom in which Sydney was hidden, and cheered it tenderly with radiant light. She was too weary to sleep,

too weary even to shade her face when the moonbeams touched it. While the light still strengthened, while the slow minutes still followed each other unheeded, the one influence that could rouse Sydney found her at last—set her faint heart throbbing—called her prostrate spirit to life again. She heard a glad cry of recognition in a child's voice :—

“ Oh, Sydney, dear, is it you ? ”

In another instant her little pupil and playfellow of former days was in her arms.

“ My darling, how did you come here ? ”

Susan answered the question. “ We are on our way back from the Palace, Miss. I am afraid,” she said timidly, “ that we ought to go in.”

Silently resigned, Sydney tried to release the child. Kitty clung to her, and kissed her ; Kitty set the nurse at defiance. “ Do

you think I am going to leave Syd now I have found her? Susan, I am astonished at you!"

Susan gave way. Where the nature is gentle, kindness and delicacy go hand-in-hand together, undisturbed by the social irregularities which beset the roadway of life. The nursemaid drew back out of hearing. Kitty's first questions followed each other in breathless succession. Some of them proved to be hard, indeed, to answer truly, and without reserve. She inquired if Sydney had seen her mother, and then she was eager to know why Sydney had been left in the garden alone.

"Why haven't you gone back to the house with Mamma?" she asked.

"Don't ask me, dear," was all that Sydney could say. Kitty drew the in-

evitable conclusion: "Have you and Mamma quarrelled?"

"Oh, no!"

"Then come indoors with me."

"Wait a little, Kitty, and tell me something about yourself. How do you get on with your lessons?"

"You dear foolish governess, do you expect me to learn my lessons, when I haven't got you to teach me? Where have you been all this long while? *I* wouldn't have gone away and left *you*!" She paused; her eager eyes studied Sydney's face with the unrestrained curiosity of a child. "Is it the moonlight that makes you look pale and wretched?" she said. "Or are you really unhappy? Tell me, Syd, do you ever sing any of those songs that I taught you, when you first came to us?"

“Never, dear!”

“Have you anybody to go out walking with you and running races with you, as I did.”

“No, my sweet! Those days have gone by for ever.”

Kitty laid her head sadly on Sydney's bosom. “It's not the moonlight,” she said; “shall I tell you a secret? Sometimes I am not happy either. Poor Papa is dead. He always liked you—I'm sure you are sorry for him.”

Astonishment held Sydney speechless. Before she could ask who had so cruelly deceived the child, and for what purpose, the nursemaid, standing behind her chair, warned her to be silent by a touch.

“I think we are all unhappy, now,” Kitty went on, still following her own little train of thought. “Mamma isn't like what she used to be. And even my nice Captain

hasn't a word to say to me. He wouldn't come back with us ; he said he would go back by himself."

Another allusion which took Sydney by surprise ! She asked who the Captain was. Kitty started as if the question shocked her. " Oh, dear, dear, this is what comes of your going away and leaving us ! You don't know Captain Bennydeck."

The name of her father's correspondent ! The name which she vaguely remembered to have heard in her childhood ! " Where did you first meet with him ?" she inquired.

" At the sea-side, dear !"

" Do you mean at Sandyseal ?"

" Yes. Mamma liked him—and Grand-mamma liked him (which is wonderful)—and I gave him a kiss. Promise me not to tell ! My nice Captain is going to be my new Papa."

Was there any possible connection between what Kitty had just said, and what the poor child had been deluded into believing when she spoke of her father? Even Susan seemed to be in the secret of this strange second marriage! She interfered with a sharp reproof. "You mustn't talk in that way, Miss Kitty. Please put her off your lap, Miss Westerfield; we have been here too long already."

Kitty proposed a compromise, "I'll go," she said, "if Syd will come with me."

"I'm sorry, my darling, to disappoint you."

Kitty refused to believe it. "You couldn't disappoint me if you tried," she said boldly.

"Indeed, indeed, I must go away. Oh, Kitty, try to bear it as I do!"

Entreaties were useless; the child refused

to hear of another parting. "I want to make you and Mamma friends again. Don't break my heart, Sydney! Come home with me, and teach me, and play with me, and love me!"

She pulled desperately at Sydney's dress; she called to Susan to help her. With tears in her eyes, the girl did her best to help them both. "Miss Westerfield will wait here," she said to Kitty, "while you speak to your Mamma.—Say Yes!" she whispered to Sydney; "it's our only chance."

The child instantly exacted a promise. In the earnestness of her love she even dictated the words. "Say it after me, as I used to say my lessons," she insisted. "Say, 'Kitty, I promise to wait for you.'"

Who that loved her could have refused to say it! In one form or another, the horrid necessity for deceit had followed, and was

still following, that first, worst act of falsehood—the elopement from Mount Morven.

Kitty was now as eager to go as she had been hitherto resolute to remain. She called for Susan to follow her, and ran to the hotel.

“ My mistress won’t let her come back—you can leave the garden that way.” The maid pointed along the path to the left, and hurried after the child.

They were gone—and Sydney was alone again.

At the parting with Kitty, the measure of her endurance was full. Not even the farewell at Mount Morven had tried her by an ordeal so cruel as this. No kind woman was willing to receive her and employ her, now. The one creature left who loved her was the faithful little friend whom she must never see again. “ I am still innocent to

that child," she thought—"and I am parted from her for ever !"

She rose to leave the garden.

A farewell look at the last place in which she had seen Kitty tempted her to indulge in a moment of delay. Her eyes rested on the turn in the path at which she had lost sight of the active little figure hastening away to plead her cause. Even in absence, the child was Sydney's good angel still. As she turned away to follow the path that had been shown to her, the relief of tears came at last. It cooled her burning head ; it comforted her aching heart. She tried to walk on. The tears blinded her—she strayed from the path—she would have fallen but for a hand that caught her, and held her up. A man's voice, firm and deep and kind, quieted her first wild feeling of terror. "My child, you are not fit to be

by yourself. Let me take care of you—let me comfort you, if I can.”

He carried her back to the seat that she had left, and waited by her in merciful silence.

“ You are very young to feel such bitter sorrow,” he said, when she was composed again. “ I don’t ask what your sorrow is ; I only want to know how I can help you.”

“ Nobody can help me.”

“ Can I take you back to your friends ?”

“ I have no friends.”

“ Pardon me, you have one friend at least—you have me.”

“ You ? A stranger ?”

“ No human creature who needs my sympathy is a stranger.”

She turned towards him for the first time. In her new position, she was clearly visible in the light. He looked at her attentively.

“I have seen you somewhere,” he said, “before now.”

She had not noticed him when they had passed each other at Sandyseal. “I think you must be mistaken,” she answered. “May I thank you for your kindness? and may I hope to be excused if I say good-night?”

He detained her. “Are you sure that you are well enough to go away by yourself?” he asked anxiously.

“I am quite sure!”

He still detained her. His memory of that first meeting at the seaside hotel, reminded him that he had seen her in the company of a man. At their second meeting, she was alone, and in tears. Sad experience led him to form his own conclusions. “If you won’t let me take care of you,” he said, “will you consider if I can

be of any use to you, and will you call at that address ?” He gave her his card. She took it without looking at it ; she was confused ; she hardly knew what to say. “ Do you doubt me ?” he asked—sadly, not angrily.

“ Oh, how can I do that ! I doubt myself ; I am not worthy of the interest you feel in me.”

“ That is a sad thing to say,” he answered. “ Let me try to give you confidence in yourself. Do you go to London when you leave this place ?”

“ Yes.”

“ To-morrow,” he resumed, “ I am going to see another poor girl who is alone in the world like you. If I tell you where she lives, will you ask her if I am a person to be trusted ?”

He had taken a letter from his pocket,

while he was speaking ; and he now tore off a part of the second leaf, and gave it to her. “ I have only lately,” he said, “ received the address from a friend.”

As he offered that explanation, the shrill sound of a child’s voice, raised in anger and entreaty, reached their ears from the neighbourhood of the hotel. Faithful little Kitty had made her escape, determined to return to Sydney—had been overtaken by the maid—and had been carried back in Susan’s arms to the house. Sydney imagined that she was not perhaps alone in recognising the voice. The stranger who had been so kind to her did certainly start, and look round.

The stillness of the night was disturbed no more. The man turned again to the person who had so strongly interested him. The person was gone.

In fear of being followed, Sydney hurried to the railway station. By the light in the carriage she looked for the first time at the fragment of the letter and the card.

The stranger had presented her with her own address ! And, when she looked at the card, the name was Bennydeck !

CHAPTER XLVII.

BETTER DO IT THAN WISH IT DONE.

MORE than once, on one and the same day, the Captain had been guilty of a weakness which would have taken his oldest friends by surprise, if they had seen him at the moment. He hesitated.

A man who has commanded ships and has risked his life in the regions of the frozen deep, is a man formed by nature and taught by habit to meet emergency face to face, to see his course straight before him, and to take it, lead him where it may. But nature and habit, formidable forces as

they are, find their master when they encounter the passion of Love.

At once perplexed and distressed by that startling change in Catherine which he had observed when her child approached her, Bennydeck's customary firmness failed him, when the course of conduct towards his betrothed wife which it might be most becoming to follow presented itself to him as a problem to be solved. When Kitty asked him to accompany her nursemaid and herself on their return to the hotel, he had refused because he felt reluctant to intrude himself on Catherine's notice, until she was ready to admit him to her confidence of her own free will. Left alone, he began to doubt whether delicacy did really require him to make the sacrifice which he had contemplated not five minutes since. It was surely possible that Catherine

might be waiting to see him, and might then offer the explanation which would prove to be equally a relief on both sides. He was on his way to the hotel when he met with Sydney Westerfield.

To see a woman in the sorest need of all that kindness and consideration could offer, and to leave her as helpless as he had found her, would have been an act of brutal indifference, revolting to any man possessed of even ordinary sensibility. The Captain had only followed his natural impulses, and had only said and done what, in nearly similar cases, he had said and done on other occasions.

Left by himself, he advanced a few steps mechanically on the way by which Sydney had escaped him—and then stopped. Was there any sufficient reason for his following her, and intruding himself on her notice?

She had recovered, she was in possession of his address, she had been referred to a person who could answer for his good intentions; all that it was his duty to do, had been done already. He turned back again, in the direction of the hotel.

Hesitating once more, he paused half-way along the corridor which led to Catherine's sitting-room. Voices reached him from persons who had entered the house by the front door. He recognised Mrs. Presty's loud confident tones. She was taking leave of friends, and was standing with her back towards him. Bennydeck waited, unobserved, until he saw her enter the sitting-room. No such explanation as he was in search of could possibly take place in the presence of Catherine's mother. He returned to the garden,

Mrs. Presty was in high spirits. She had enjoyed the Festival; she had taken the lead among the friends who accompanied her to the Palace; she had ordered everything, and had paid for nothing, at that worst of all bad public dinners in England, the dinner which pretends to be French. In a buoyant frame of mind, ready for more enjoyment if she could only find it, what did she see on opening the sitting-room door? To use the expressive language of the stage, Catherine was "discovered alone"—with her elbows on the table, and her face hidden in her hands—the picture of despair.

Mrs. Presty surveyed the spectacle before her with righteous indignation visible in every line of her face. The arrangement which bound her daughter to give Bennydeck his final reply, on that day, had been well

known to her when she left the hotel in the morning. The conclusion at which she arrived, on returning at night, was expressed with Roman brevity and Roman eloquence in four words :—

“ Oh, the poor Captain !”

Catherine suddenly looked up.

“ I knew it,” Mrs. Presty continued, with her sternest emphasis ; “ I see what you have done, in your face. You have refused Bennydeck.”

“ God forgive me, I have been wicked enough to accept him !”

Hearing this, some mothers might have made apologies ; and other mothers might have asked what that penitential reply could possibly mean. Mrs. Presty was no matron of the ordinary type. She welcomed the good news, without taking the smallest

notice of the expression of self-reproach which had accompanied it.

“My dear child, accept the congratulations of your fond old mother. I have never been one of the kissing sort (I mean of course where women are concerned); but this is an occasion which justifies something quite out of the common way. Come and kiss me.”

Catherine took no notice of that outburst of maternal love.

“I have forgotten everything that I ought to have remembered,” she said. “In my vanity, in my weakness, in my selfish enjoyment of the passing moment, I have been too supremely happy even to think of the trials of my past life, and of the false position in which they have placed me towards a man, whom I ought to be ashamed to deceive. I have only been recalled to a

sense of duty, I might almost say to a sense of decency, by my poor little child. If Kitty had not reminded me of her father——”

Mrs. Presty dropped into a chair : she was really frightened. Her fat cheeks trembled like a jelly on a dish that is suddenly moved.

“ Has that man been here ?” she asked.

“ What man ?”

“ The man who may break off your marriage if he meets with the Captain. Has Herbert Linley been here ?”

“ Certainly not. The one person associated with my troubles whom I have seen to-day is Sydney Westerfield.”

Mrs. Presty bounced out of her chair. “ You—have seen—Sydney Westerfield ?” she repeated, with emphatic pauses which expressed amazement tempered by unbelief.

“ Yes ; I have seen her.”

“ Where ? ”

“ In the garden.”

“ And spoken to her ? ”

“ Yes.”

Mrs. Presty raised her eyes to the ceiling. Whether she expected our old friend “ the recording angel ” to take down the questions and answers that had just passed, or whether she was only waiting to see the hotel that held her daughter collapse under a sense of moral responsibility, it is not possible to decide. After an awful pause, the old lady remembered that she had something more to say—and said it.

“ I make no remark, Catherine ; I don’t even want to know what you and Miss Westerfield said to each other. At the same time, as a matter of convenience to myself, I wish to ascertain whether I must leave this hotel or not. The same house

doesn't hold that woman and Mr. Has she gone?"

"She has gone."

Mrs. Presty looked round the room. "And taken Kitty with her?" she asked.

"Don't speak of Kitty!" Catherine cried in the greatest distress. "I have had to keep the poor innocent affectionate child apart from Miss Westerfield by force. My heart aches when I think of it."

"I'm not surprised, Catherine. My granddaughter has been brought up on the modern system. Children are all little angels — no punishments — only gentle remonstrance — 'Don't be naughty, dear, because you will make poor Mamma unhappy.' And then, Mamma grieves over it and wonders over it, when she finds her little angel disobedient. What a fatal system of education !

All my success in life ; every quality that endeared me to your father and Mr. Presty ; every social charm that has made me the idol of society, I attribute entirely to judicious correction in early life, applied freely with the open hand. We will change the subject. Where is dear Bennydeck ? I want to congratulate him on his approaching marriage." She looked hard at her daughter, and mentally added : " He'll live to regret it !"

Catherine knew nothing of the Captain's movements. " Like you," she told her mother, " I have something to say to him, and I don't know where he is."

Mrs. Presty still kept her eyes fixed on her daughter. Nobody, observing Catherine's face, and judging also by the tone of her voice, would have supposed that she was alluding to the man, whose irresistible

attractions had won her. She looked ill at ease, and she spoke sadly.

“ You don’t seem to be in good spirits, my dear,” Mrs. Presty gently suggested.

“ No lovers’ quarrel already, I hope ?”

“ Nothing of the kind.”

“ Can I be of any use to you ?”

“ You might be of the greatest use. But I know only too well, you would refuse.”

Thus far, Mrs. Presty had been animated by curiosity. She began now to feel vaguely alarmed. “ After all that I have done for you,” she answered, “ I don’t think you ought to say that. Why should I refuse ?”

Catherine hesitated.

Her mother persisted in pressing her. “ Has it anything to do with Captain Bennydeck ?”

“ Yes.”

“ What is it ?”

Catherine roused her courage.

“You know what it is as well as I do,” she said. “Captain Bennydeck believes that I am free to marry him, because I am a widow. You might help me to tell him the truth.”

“What!!!”

That exclamation of horror and astonishment was loud enough to have been heard in the garden. If Mrs. Presty’s hair had been all her own, it must have been hair that stood on end.

Catherine quietly rose. “We won’t discuss it,” she said with resignation. “I knew you would refuse me.” She approached the door. Her mother got up and resolutely stood in the way. “Before you commit an act of downright madness,” Mrs. Presty said, “I mean to try if I can stop you. Go back to your chair.”

Catherine refused.

“ I know how it will end,” she answered ;
“ and the sooner it ends the better. You
will find that I am quite as determined as
you are. A man who loves me as *he* loves
me, is a man whom I refuse to deceive.”

“ Let’s have it out plainly,” Mrs. Presty
insisted. “ He believes your first marriage
has been dissolved by death. Do you mean
to tell him that it has been dissolved by
Divorce ?”

“ I do.”

“ What right has he to know it ?”

“ A right that is not to be denied.
A wife must have no secrets from her
husband.”

Mrs. Presty hit back smartly.

“ You’re not his wife yet. Wait till you
are married.”

“ Never ! Who but a wretch would

marry an honest man under false pretences ?”

“ I deny the false pretences ! You talk as if you were an impostor. Are you, or are you not, the accomplished lady who has charmed him ? Are you, or are you not, the beautiful woman whom he loves ? There isn’t a stain on your reputation. In every respect you are the wife he wants, and the wife who is worthy of him. And you are cruel enough to disturb the poor man about a matter that doesn’t concern him ! you are fool enough to raise doubts of you in his mind, and give him a reproach to cast in your teeth the first time you do anything that happens to offend him ! Any woman—I don’t care who she may be—might envy the home that’s waiting for you and your child, if you’re wise enough to hold your tongue. Upon my word, Catherine, I am

ashamed of you. Have you no principles ?”

She really meant it ! The purely selfish considerations which she urged on her daughter were so many undeniable virtues in Mrs. Presty’s estimation. She took the highest moral ground, and stood up and crowed on it, with a pride in her own principles which the Primate of all England might have envied.

But Catherine’s rare resolution held as firm as ever. She got a little nearer to the door. “ Good-night, mamma,” was the only reply she made.

“ Is that all you have to say to me ?”

“ I am tired, and I must rest. Please let me go.”

Mrs. Presty threw open the door with a bang.

“ You refuse to take my advice ?” she

said. "Oh, very well, have your own way! You are sure to prosper in the end. These are the days of exhibitions and gold medals. If there is ever an exhibition of idiots at large, I know who might win the prize."

Catherine was accustomed to preserve her respect for her mother under difficulties; but this was more than her sense of filial duty could successfully endure.

"I only wish I had never taken your advice," she answered. "Many a miserable moment would have been spared me, if I had always done what I am doing now. You have been the evil genius of my life, since Miss Westerfield first came into our house."

She passed through the open doorway—stopped—and came back again. "I didn't mean to offend you, Mamma—but you do say such irritating things. Good-night."

Not a word of reply acknowledged that kindly-meant apology. Mrs. Presty—vivacious Mrs. Presty of the indomitable spirit and the ready tongue—was petrified. She, the guardian angel of the family, whose experience, devotion, and sound sense had steered Catherine through difficulties and dangers which must have otherwise ended in utter domestic shipwreck—she, the model mother—had been stigmatised as the evil genius of her daughter's life by no less a person than that daughter herself! What was to be said? What was to be done? What terrible and unexampled course of action should be taken after such an insult as this? Mrs. Presty stood helpless in the middle of the room, and asked herself these questions, and waited and wondered and found no answer.

An interval passed. There was a knock

at the door. A waiter appeared. He said :
“ A gentleman to see Mrs. Norman.”

The gentleman entered the room, and revealed himself.

Herbert Linley !

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BE CAREFUL !

THE divorced husband looked at his mother-in-law without making the slightest sacrifice to the claims of politeness. He neither offered his hand nor made his bow. His frowning eyebrows, his flushed face, betrayed the anger that was consuming him.

“ I want to see Catherine,” he said.

This deliberate rudeness proved to be the very stimulant that was required to restore Mrs. Presty to herself. The smile that always meant mischief made its threatening appearance on the old lady's face.

“What sort of company have you been keeping since I last saw you?” she began.

“What have you got to do with the company I keep?”

“Nothing whatever, I am happy to say. I was merely wondering whether you have been travelling lately, in the south part of Africa, and have lived exclusively in the society of Hottentots. The only other explanation of your behaviour is that I have been so unfortunate as to offend you. But it seems improbable—I am not your wife.”

“Thank God, for that!”

“Thank God, as you say. But I should really be glad (as a mere matter of curiosity) to know what your extraordinary conduct means. You present yourself in this room uninvited, you find a lady here, and you behave as if you had come into a shop and wanted to ask the price of something. Let

me give you a lesson in good manners. Observe: I receive you with a bow, and I say: How do you do, Mr. Linley? Do you understand me?"

"I don't want to understand you—I want to see Catherine."

"Who is Catherine?"

"You know as well as I do — your daughter."

"My daughter, sir, is a stranger to you. We will speak of her, if you please, by the name—the illustrious name—which she inherited at her birth. You wish to see Mrs. Norman?"

"Call her what you like. I have a word to say to her, and I mean to say it."

"No, Mr. Linley, you won't say it."

"We'll see about that! Where is she?"

"My daughter is not well."

"Well or ill, I shan't keep her long."

“My daughter has retired to her room.”

“Where is her room?”

Mrs. Presty moved to the fireplace, and laid her hand on the bell.

“Are you aware that this house is an hotel?” she asked.

“It doesn’t matter to me what it is.”

“Oh, yes, it does. An hotel keeps waiters. An hotel, when it is as large as this, has a policeman in attendance. Must I ring?”

The choice between giving way to Mrs. Presty, or being disgracefully dismissed, was placed plainly before him. Herbert’s life had been the life of a gentleman; he knew that he had forgotten himself; it was impossible that he could hesitate.

“I won’t trouble you to ring,” he said; “and I will beg your pardon for having allowed my temper to get the better of me.

At the same time it ought to be remembered, I think, in my favour, that I have had some provocation."

"I don't agree with you," Mrs. Presty answered. She was deaf to any appeal for mercy from Herbert Linley. "As to provocation," she added, returning to her chair without asking him to be seated, "when you apply that word to yourself, you insult my daughter and me. *You* provoked? Oh, heavens!"

"You wouldn't say that," he urged, speaking with marked restraint of tone and manner, "if you knew what I have had to endure——"

Mrs. Presty suddenly looked towards the door. "Wait a minute," she said; "I think I hear somebody coming in."

In the silence that followed, footsteps were audible outside—not approaching the

door, however, but retiring from it. Mrs. Presty had apparently been mistaken. "Yes?" she said, resignedly, permitting Herbert to proceed.

He really had something to say for himself, and he said it with sufficient moderation. That he had been guilty of serious offences he made no attempt to deny; but he pleaded that he had not escaped without justly suffering for what he had done. He had been entirely in the wrong when he threatened to take the child away from her mother by force of law; but had he not been punished when his wife obtained her Divorce, and separated him from his little daughter as well as from herself? (No: Mrs. Presty failed to see it; if anybody had suffered by the Divorce, the victim was her injured daughter.) Still patient, Herbert did not deny the injury; he only submitted

once more that he had suffered his punishment. Whether his life with Sydney Westerfield had or had not been a happy one, he must decline to say; he would only declare that it had come to an end. She had left him. Yes! she had left him for ever. He had no wish to persuade her to return to their guilty life; they were both penitent, they were both ashamed of it. But she had gone away without the provision which he was bound in honour to offer to her.

“She is friendless; she may be in a state of poverty that I tremble to think of,” Herbert declared. “Is there nothing to plead for me in such anxiety as I am suffering now?” Mrs. Presty stopped him there; she had heard enough of Sydney already.

“I see nothing to be gained,” she said, “by dwelling on the past; and I should be

glad to know why you have come to this place to-night."

"I have come to see Kitty."

"Quite out of the question."

"Don't tell me that, Mrs. Presty ! I'm one of the wretchedest men living, and I ask for the consolation of seeing my child. Kitty hasn't forgotten me yet, I know. Her mother can't be so cruel as to refuse. She shall fix her own time, and send me away when she likes ; I'll submit to anything. Will you ask Catherine to let me see Kitty?"

"I can't do it."

"Why not?"

"For private reasons."

"What reasons?"

"For reasons into which you have no right to inquire."

He got up from his chair. His face

presented the same expression which Mrs. Presty had seen on it when he first entered the room.

“When I came in here,” he said, “I wished to be certain of one thing. Your prevarication has told me what I wanted to know. The newspapers had Catherine’s own authority for it, Mrs. Presty, when they called her widow. I know now why my brother, who never deceived me before, has deceived me about this. I understand the part that your daughter has been playing—and I am as certain as if I had heard it, of the devilish lie that one of you—perhaps both of you—must have told my poor child. No, no ; I had better not see Catherine. Many a man has killed his wife, and has not had such good reason for doing it as I have. You are quite right to keep me away from her.”

He stopped—and looked suddenly towards the door. “I hear her,” he cried. “She’s coming in !”

The footsteps outside were audible once more. This time, they were approaching ; they were close to the door. Herbert drew back from it. Looking round to see that he was out of the way, Mrs. Presty rushed forward—tore open the door in terror of what might happen—and admitted Captain Bennydeck.

CHAPTER XLIX.

KEEP THE SECRET.

THE Captain's attention was first attracted by the visitor whom he found in the room. He bowed to the stranger ; but the first impression produced on him did not appear to have been of the favourable kind, when he turned next to Mrs. Presty.

Observing that she was agitated he made the customary apologies, expressing his regret if he had been so unfortunate as to commit an intrusion. Trusting in the good sense and good breeding which distinguished him on other occasions, Mrs. Presty anticipated that he would see the propriety of

leaving her alone again with the person whom he had found in her company. To her dismay he remained in the room ; and, worse still, he noticed her daughter's absence, and asked if there was any serious cause for it.

For the moment, Mrs. Presty was unable to reply. Her presence of mind—or, to put it more correctly, her ready audacity—deserted her, when she saw Catherine's husband that had been, and Catherine's husband that was to be, meeting as strangers, and but too likely to discover each other.

In all her experience she had never been placed in such a position of embarrassment as the position in which she found herself now. The sense of honour which had prompted Catherine's resolution to make Bennydeck acquainted with the catastrophe of her married life, might plead her excuse in the

estimation of a man devotedly attached to her. But if the Captain was first informed that he had been deceived by a person who was a perfect stranger to him, what hope could be entertained of his still holding himself bound by his marriage engagement? It was even possible that distrust had been already excited in his mind. He must certainly have heard a man's voice raised in anger, when he approached the door—and he was now observing that man with an air of curiosity which was already assuming the appearance of distrust. That Herbert, on his side, resented the Captain's critical examination of him was plainly visible in his face. After a glance at Bennydeck, he asked Mrs. Presty “who that gentleman was.”

“I may be mistaken,” he added; “but I thought your friend looked at me just now as if he knew me.”

“I have met you, sir, before this.” The Captain made the reply with a courteous composure of tone and manner which apparently reminded Herbert of the claims of politeness.

“May I ask where I had the honour of seeing you?” he inquired.

“We passed each other in the hall of the hotel at Sandyseal. You had a young lady with you.”

“Your memory is a better one than mine, sir. I fail to remember the circumstance to which you refer.”

Bennydeck let the matter rest there. Struck by the remarkable appearance of embarrassment in Mrs. Presty’s manner—and feeling (in spite of Herbert’s politeness of language) increased distrust of the man whom he had found visiting her—he thought it might not be amiss to hint that

she could rely on him in case of necessity. "I am afraid I have interrupted a confidential interview," he began; "and I ought perhaps to explain——"

Mrs. Presty listened absently; preoccupied by the fear that Herbert would provoke a dangerous disclosure, and by the difficulty of discovering a means of preventing it. She interrupted the Captain.

"Excuse me for one moment; I have a word to say to this gentleman." Benny-deck immediately drew back, and Mrs. Presty lowered her voice. "If you wish to see Kitty," she resumed, attacking Herbert on his weak side, "it depends entirely on your discretion."

"What do you mean by discretion?"

"Be careful not to speak of our family troubles—and I promise you shall see Kitty. That is what I mean."

Herbert declined to say whether he would be careful or not. He was determined to find out, first, with what purpose Bennydeck had entered the room. "The gentleman was about to explain himself to you," he said to Mrs. Presty. "Why don't you give him the opportunity?"

She had no choice but to submit—in appearance at least. Never had she hated Herbert as she hated him at that moment. The Captain went on with his explanation. He had his reasons (he said) for hesitating, in the first instance, to present himself uninvited, and he accordingly retired. On second thoughts, however, he had returned, in the hope——

"In the hope," Herbert interposed, "of seeing Mrs. Presty's daughter?"

"That was one of my motives," Bennydeck answered.

“Is it indiscreet to inquire what the other motive was?”

“Not at all. I heard a stranger’s voice, speaking in a tone which, to say the least of it, is not customary in a lady’s room; and I thought——”

Herbert interrupted him again. “And you thought your interference might be welcome to the lady! Am I right?”

“Quite right.”

“Am I making another lucky guess, if I suppose myself to be speaking to Captain Bennydeck?”

“I shall be glad to hear, sir, how you have arrived at the knowledge of my name.”

“Shall we say, Captain, that I have arrived at it by instinct?”

His face, as he made that reply, alarmed Mrs. Presty. She cast a look at him, partly of entreaty, partly of warning. No effect

was produced by the look. He continued, in a tone of ironical compliment: "You must pay the penalty of being a public character. Your marriage is announced in the newspapers."

"I seldom read the newspapers."

"Ah, indeed? Perhaps the report is not true? As you don't read the newspapers, allow me to repeat it. You are engaged to marry the 'beautiful widow, Mrs. Norman.' I think I quote those last words correctly?"

Mrs. Presty suddenly got up. With an inscrutable face that told no tales, she advanced to the door. Herbert's insane jealousy of the man who was about to become Catherine's husband had led him into a serious error; he had driven Catherine's mother to desperation. In that state of mind she recovered her lost audacity, as a matter of course. Opening the door, she

turned round to the two men, with a magnificent impudence of manner which in her happiest moments she had never surpassed.

“ I am sorry to interrupt this interesting conversation,” she said ; “ but I have stupidly forgotten one of my domestic duties. You will allow me to return, and listen with renewed pleasure, when my household business is off my mind. I shall hope to find you both more polite to each other than ever, when I come back.” She was in such a frenzy of suppressed rage that she actually kissed her hand to them as she left the room !

Bennydeck looked after her, convinced that some sinister purpose was concealed under Mrs. Presty’s false excuses, and wholly unable to imagine what that purpose might be. Herbert still persisted in trying to force a quarrel on the Captain.

“As I remarked just now,” he proceeded, “newspaper reports are not always to be trusted. Do you seriously mean, my dear sir, to marry Mrs. Norman?”

“I look forward to that honour and that happiness. But I am at a loss to know how it interests you.”

“In that case allow me to enlighten you. My name is Herbert Linley.”

He had held his name in reserve, feeling certain of the effect which he would produce when he pronounced it. The result took him completely by surprise. Not the slightest appearance of agitation showed itself in Bennydeck's manner. On the contrary, he looked as if there was something that interested him in the discovery of the name.

“You are probably related to a friend of mine,” he said quietly.

“ Who is your friend ?”

“ Mr. Randal Linley.”

Herbert was entirely unprepared for this discovery. Once more, the Captain had got the best of it.

“ Are you and Randal Linley intimate friends ?” he inquired, as soon as he had recovered himself.

“ Most intimate.”

“ It’s strange that he should never have mentioned me, on any occasion when you and he were together.”

“ It does indeed seem strange.”

Herbert paused. His brother’s keen sense of the disgrace that he had inflicted on the family recurred to his memory. He began to understand Randal’s otherwise unaccountable silence.

“ Are you nearly related to Mr. Randal Linley ?” the Captain asked.

“I am his elder brother.”

Ignorant on his part of the family disgrace, Bennydeck heard that reply with amazement. From his point of view, it was impossible to account for Randal's silence.

“Will you think me very inquisitive,” Herbert resumed, “if I ask whether my brother approves of your marriage?”

There was a change in his tone, as he put that question, which warned Bennydeck to be on his guard. “I have not yet consulted my friend's opinion,” he answered shortly.

Herbert threw off the mask. “In the meantime, you shall have my opinion,” he said. “Your marriage is a crime—and I mean to prevent it.”

The Captain left his chair, and sternly faced the man who had spoken those insolent words.

“Are you mad?” he asked.

Herbert was on the point of declaring himself to have been Catherine's husband, until the law dissolved their marriage—when a waiter came in and approached him with a message. “You are wanted immediately, sir.”

“Who wants me?”

“A person outside, sir. It's a serious matter—there is not a moment to lose.”

Herbert turned to the Captain. “I must have your promise to wait for me,” he said, “or I don't leave the room.”

“Make your mind easy. I shall not stir from this place till you have explained yourself,” was the firm reply.

The servant led the way out. He crossed the passage, and opened the door of a waiting-room. Herbert passed in—and found himself face to face with his divorced wife.

CHAPTER L.

FORGIVENESS TO THE INJURED DOTH BELONG.

WITHOUT one word of explanation, Catherine stepped up to him, and spoke first.

“ Answer me this,” she said—“ have you told Captain Bennydeck who I am ?”

“ Not yet.”

The shortest possible reply was the only reply that he could make, in the moment when he first looked at her.

She was not the same woman whom he had last seen at Sandyseal, returning for her lost book. The agitation produced by that unexpected meeting had turned her pale ;

the overpowering sense of injury had hardened and aged her face. This time, she was prepared to see him : this time, she was conscious of a resolution that raised her in her own estimation. Her clear blue eyes glittered as she looked at him, the bright colour glowed in her cheeks ; he was literally dazzled by her beauty.

“In the past time which we both remember,” she resumed, “you once said that I was the most truthful woman you had ever known. Have I done anything to disturb that part of your old faith in me ?”

“Nothing.”

She went on : “Before you entered this house, I had determined to tell Captain Bennydeck what you have not told him yet. When I say that, do you believe me ?”

If he had been able to look away from her, he might have foreseen what was coming; and he would have remembered that his triumph over the Captain was still incomplete. But his eyes were riveted on her face; his tenderest memories of her were pleading with him. He answered as a docile child might have answered:

“I do believe you.”

She took a letter from her bosom; and, showing it, begged him to remark that it was not closed.

“I was in my bedroom writing,” she said, “when my mother came to me and told me that you and Captain Bennydeck had met in my sitting-room. She dreaded a quarrel and an exposure, and she urged me to go downstairs and insist on sending you away—or to permit her to do so, if I could not prevail on myself to follow her

advice. I refused to allow the shameful dismissal of a man who had once had his claim on my respect. The only alternative that I could see was to speak with you here, in private, as we are speaking now. My mother undertook to manage this for me; she saw the servant, and gave him the message which you received. Where is Captain Bennydeck now?"

"He is waiting in the sitting-room."

"Waiting for you?"

"Yes."

She considered a little before she said her next words.

"I have brought with me what I was writing in my own room," she resumed, "wishing to show it to you. Will you read it?"

She offered the letter to him. He hesitated. "Is it addressed to me?" he asked.

“It is addressed to Captain Bennydeck,” she answered.

The jealousy that still rankled in his mind—jealousy that he had no more lawful or reasonable claim to feel than if he had been a stranger—urged him to assume an indifference which he was far from feeling. He begged that Catherine would accept his excuses.

She refused to excuse him.

“Before you decide,” she said, “you ought at least to know why I have written to Captain Bennydeck, instead of speaking to him as I had proposed. My heart failed me when I thought of the distress that he might feel—and, perhaps, of the contempt for myself which, good and gentle as he is, he might not be able to disguise. My letter tells him the truth, without concealment. I am obliged to speak of the

manner in which you have treated me, and of the circumstances which forced me into acts of deception that I now bitterly regret. I have tried not to misrepresent you ; I have been anxious to do you no wrong. It is for you, not for me, to say if I have succeeded. Once more, will you read my letter ?”

The sad self-possession, the quiet dignity with which she spoke, appealed to his memory of the pardon that she had so generously granted, while he and Sydney Westerfield were still guiltless of the injury inflicted on her at a later time. Silently, he took the letter from her, and read it.

She kept her face turned away from him and from the light. The effort to be still calm and reasonable—to suffer the heart-ache, and not to let the suffering be seen—made cruel demands on the self-betraying

nature of a woman possessed by strong emotion. There was a moment when she heard him sigh while he was reading. She looked round at him, and instantly looked away again.

He rose and approached her; he held out the letter in one hand, and pointed to it with the other. Twice he attempted to speak. Twice the influence of the letter unmanned him.

It was a hard struggle, but it was for her sake: he mastered his weakness, and forced his trembling voice to submit to his will.

“Is the man whom you are going to marry worthy of *this*?” he asked, still pointing to the letter.

She answered firmly: “More than worthy of it.”

“Marry him, Catherine — and forget Me.”

The great heart that he had so sorely wounded pitied him, forgave him, answered him with a burst of tears. She held out one imploring hand. His lips touched it—he was gone.

CHAPTER LI.

DUM SPIRO, SPERO.

BRISK and smiling, Mrs. Presty presented herself in the waiting-room. "We have got rid of our enemy!" she announced; "I looked out of the window, and saw him leaving the hotel." She paused, struck by the deep dejection expressed in her daughter's attitude. "Catherine!" she exclaimed, "I tell you Herbert has gone, and you look as if you regretted it! Is there anything wrong? Did my message fail to bring him here?"

"No."

"He was bent on mischief when I saw

him last. Has he told Bennydeck of the Divorce?"

"No."

"Thank Heaven for that! There is no one to be afraid of now. Where is the Captain?"

"He is still in the sitting-room."

"Why don't you go to him?"

"I daren't!"

"Shall I go?"

"Yes—and give him this."

Mrs. Presty took the letter. "You mean, tear it up," she said, "and quite right too."

"No; I mean what I say."

"My dear child, if you have any regard for yourself, if you have any regard for me, don't ask me to give Bennydeck this mad letter! You won't hear reason? You still insist on it?"

“ I do.”

“ If Kitty ever behaves to you, Catherine, as you have behaved to me—you will have richly deserved it. Oh, if you were only a child again, I’d beat it out of you—I would !”

With that outburst of temper, she took the letter to Bennydeck. In less than a minute she returned, a tamed woman. “ He frightens me,” she said.

“ Is he angry ?”

“ No—and that’s the worst of it. When men are angry, I am never afraid of them. He’s quiet, too quiet. He said, ‘ I’m waiting for Mr. Herbert Linley ; where is he ?’ I said, ‘ He has left the hotel.’ He said, ‘ What does that mean ?’ I handed the letter to him. ‘ Perhaps this will explain,’ I said. He looked at the address, and at once recognised your hand-

writing. ‘Why does she write to me when we are both in the same house? Why doesn’t she speak to me?’ I pointed to the letter. He wouldn’t look at it; he looked straight at me. ‘There’s some mystery here,’ he said; ‘I’m a plain man, I don’t like mysteries. Mr. Linley had something to say to me, when the message interrupted him. Who sent the message? Do you know?’ If there is a woman living, Catherine, who would have told the truth, in such a position as mine was at that moment, I should like to have her photograph. I said I didn’t know; and I saw he suspected me of deceiving him. Those kind eyes of his—you wouldn’t believe it of them!—looked me through and through. ‘I won’t detain you any longer,’ he said. I’m not easily daunted as you know—the relief it was to me to get away from him is not

to be told in words. What do you think I heard when I got into the passage? I heard him turn the key of the door. He's locked in, my dear; he's locked in! We are too near him here. Come upstairs."

Catherine refused. "I ought to be near him," she said hopefully; "he may wish to see me."

Her mother reminded her that the waiting-room was a public room, and might be wanted.

"Let's go into the garden," Mrs. Presty proposed. "We can tell the servant who waits on us where we may be found."

Catherine yielded. Mrs. Presty's excitement found its overflow in talking perpetually. Her daughter had nothing to say, and cared nothing where they went; all outward manifestation of life in her seemed to be suspended at that terrible

time of expectation. They wandered here and there, in the quietest part of the grounds. Half an hour passed—and no message was received. The hotel clock struck the hour—and still nothing happened.

“I can walk no longer,” Catherine said. She dropped on one of the garden chairs, holding by her mother’s hand. “Go to him, for God’s sake!” she entreated. “I can endure it no longer.”

Mrs. Presty—even bold Mrs. Presty—was afraid to face him again. “He’s fond of the child,” she suggested; “let’s send Kitty.”

Some little girls were at play close by who knew where Kitty was to be found. In a few minutes more they brought her back with them. Mrs. Presty gave the child her instructions, and sent her away

proud of her errand, and delighted at the prospect of visiting the Captain by herself, as if she "was a grown-up lady."

This time the period of suspense was soon at an end. Kitty came running back. "It's lucky you sent me," she declared. "He wouldn't have opened the door to anybody else—he said so himself."

"Did you knock softly, as I told you?" Mrs. Presty asked.

"No, Grandmamma, I forgot that. I tried to open the door. He called out not to disturb him. I said, 'It's only me,' and he opened the door directly. What makes him look so pale, Mamma? Is he ill?"

"Perhaps he feels the heat," Mrs. Presty suggested judiciously.

"He said, 'Dear little Kitty,' and he caught me up in his arms and kissed me.

When he sat down again he took me on his knee, and he asked if I was fond of him, and I said, ‘Yes, I am,’ and he kissed me again, and he asked if I had come to stay with him and keep him company. I forgot what you wanted me to say,” Kitty acknowledged, addressing Mrs. Presty; “so I made it up out of my own head.”

“What did you tell him?”

“I told him, Mamma was as fond of him as I was, and I said, ‘We will both keep you company.’ He put me down on the floor, and he got up and went to the window and looked out. I told him that wasn’t the way to find her, and I said, ‘I know where she is; I’ll go and fetch her.’ He’s an obstinate man, our nice Captain. He wouldn’t come away from the window. I said, ‘You wish to see Mamma, don’t you?’ And he said Yes. ‘You mustn’t lock the

door again,' I told him, 'she won't like that;' and what do you think he said? He said, 'Good-bye, Kitty!' Wasn't it funny? He didn't seem to know what he was talking about. If you ask my opinion, Mamma, I think the sooner you go to him the better."

Catherine hesitated. Mrs. Presty on one side, and Kitty on the other, led her between them into the house.

CHAPTER LII.

L'HOMME PROPOSE, ET DIEU DISPOSE.

CAPTAIN BENNYDECK met Catherine and her child at the open door of the room. Mrs. Presty, stopping a few paces behind them, waited in the passage ; eager to see what the Captain's face might tell her. It told her nothing.

But Catherine saw a change in him. There was something in his manner unnaturally passive and subdued. It suggested the idea of a man whose mind had been forced into an effort of self-control which had exhausted its power, and had allowed the signs of depression and fatigue

to find their way to the surface. The Captain was quiet, the Captain was kind ; neither by word nor look did he warn Catherine that the continuity of their intimacy was in danger of being broken—and yet, her spirits sank, when they met at the open door.

He led her to a chair, and said she had come to him at a time when he especially wished to speak with her. Kitty asked if she might remain with them. He put his hand caressingly on her head ; “ No, my dear, not now.”

The child eyed him for a moment, conscious of something which she had never noticed in him before, and puzzled by the discovery. She walked back, cowed and silent, to the door. He followed her and spoke to Mrs. Presty. “ Take your grandchild into the garden ; we will join

you there in a little while. Good-bye for the present, Kitty.” Kitty said good-bye mechanically—like a dull child repeating a lesson. Her grandmother led her away in silence.

Bennydeck closed the door, and seated himself by Catherine. “I thank you for your letter,” he said. “If such a thing is possible, it has given me a higher opinion of you than any opinion that I have held yet.”

She looked at him with a feeling of surprise, so sudden and so overwhelming, that she was at a loss how to reply. The last words which she expected to hear from him, when he alluded to her confession, were the words that had just passed his lips.

“You have owned to faults that you have committed, and deceptions that you

have sanctioned," he went on — "with nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by telling the truth. Who but a good woman would have done that?"

There was a deeper feeling in him than he had ventured to express. It betrayed itself by a momentary trembling in his voice. Catherine drew a little closer to him.

"You don't know how you surprise me, how you relieve me," she said warmly—and pressed his hand. In the eagerness of her gratitude, in the gladness that had revived her sinking heart, she failed to feel that the pressure was not returned.

"What have I said to surprise you?" he asked. "What anxiety have I relieved, without knowing it?"

"I was afraid you would despise me."

"Why should I despise you?"

“Have I not gained your good opinion under false pretences? Have I not allowed you to admire me and to love me, without telling you that there was anything in my past life which I had reason to regret? Even now, I can hardly realize that you excuse and forgive me; you who have read the confession of my worst faults; you who know the shocking inconsistencies of my character——”

“Say at once,” he answered, “that I know you to be a mortal creature. Is there any human character, even the noblest, that is always consistently good?”

“One reads of them sometimes,” she suggested, “in books.”

“Yes,” he said. “In the worst books you could possibly read—the only really immoral books written in our time.”

“Why are they immoral?”

“For this plain reason, that they deliberately pervert the truth. Clap-trap, you innocent creature, to catch foolish readers ! When do these consistently good people appear in the life around us, the life that we all see ? Never ! Are the best mortals that ever lived, above the reach of temptation to do ill, and are they always too good to yield to it ? How does the Lord’s Prayer instruct humanity ? It commands us all, without exception, to pray that we may not be led into temptation. You have been led into temptation. In other words, you are a human being. All that a human being could do you have done—you have repented and confessed. Don’t I know how you have suffered and how you have been tried ! Why, what a mean Pharisee I should be if I presumed to despise you !”

She looked at him proudly and gratefully ; she lifted her arm as if to thank him by an embrace, and suddenly let it drop again at her side.

“Am I tormenting myself without cause?” she said. “Or is there something that looks like sorrow, showing itself to me in your face ?”

“You see the bitterest sorrow that I have felt in all my sad life.”

“Is it sorrow for me ?”

“No. Sorrow for myself.”

“Has it come to you through me ? Is it my fault ?”

“It is more your misfortune than your fault.”

“Then you can feel for me ?”

“I can and do.”

He had not yet set her at ease.

“I am afraid your sympathy stops some-

where," she said. "Where does it stop?"

For the first time, he shrank from directly answering her. "I begin to wish I had followed your example," he owned. "It might have been better for both of us if I had answered your letter in writing."

"Tell me plainly," she cried, "is there something you can't forgive?"

"There is something I can't forget."

"What is it? Oh, what is it! When my mother told poor little Kitty that her father was dead, are you even more sorry than I am that I allowed it? Are you even more ashamed of me than I am of myself?"

"No. I regret that you allowed it; but I understand how you were led into that error. Your husband's infidelity had shaken his hold on your respect for him and your

sympathy with him, and had so left you without your natural safeguard against Mrs. Presty's sophistical reasoning and bad example. But for *that* wrong-doing there is a remedy left. Enlighten your child as you have enlightened me ; and then—I have no personal motive for pleading Mr. Herbert Linley's cause, after what I have seen of him—and then, acknowledge the father's claim on the child."

"Do you mean his claim to see her?"

"What else can I mean? Yes! let him see her. Do (God help me, now when it's too late!)—do what you ought to have done, on that accursed day which will be the blackest day in my calendar, to the end of my life."

"What day do you mean?"

"The day when you remembered the law of man, and forgot the law of God ;

the day when you broke the marriage tie, the sacred marriage tie, by a Divorce !”

She listened — not conscious now of suspense or fear ; she listened, with her whole heart in revolt against him.

“ You are too cruel !” she declared. “ You can feel for me, you can understand me, you can pardon me in everything else that I have done. But you judge without mercy of the one blameless act of my life, since my husband left me—the act that protected a mother in the exercise of her rights. Oh, can it be you ? Can it be you ?”

“ It can be,” he said, sighing bitterly ; “ and it is.”

“ What horrible delusion possesses you ? Why do you curse the happy day, the blessed day, which saw me safe in the possession of my child ?”

“For the worst and meanest of reasons,” he answered—“a selfish reason. Don’t suppose that I have spoken of Divorce as one who has had occasion to think of it. I have had no occasion to think of it; I don’t think of it even now. I abhor it, because it stands between you and me. I loathe it, I curse it, because it separates us for life.”

“Separates us for life? How?”

“Can you ask me?”

“Yes, I do ask you!”

He looked round him. A society of religious persons had visited the hotel, when it was first opened, and had obtained permission to place a copy of the Bible in every room. One of those copies lay on the chimney-piece in Catherine’s room. Bennydeck brought it to her, and placed it on the table near which she was sitting.

He turned to the New Testament, and opened it at the Gospel of Saint Matthew. With his hand on the page, he said :

“ I have done my best rightly to understand the duties of a Christian. One of those duties, as I interpret them, is to let what I believe show itself in what I do. You have seen enough of me, I hope, to know (though I have not been forward in speaking of it) that I am, to the best of my poor ability, a faithful follower of the teaching of Christ. I dare not set my own interests and my own happiness above His laws. If I suffer in obeying them as I suffer now, I must still submit. They are the laws of my life.”

“ Is it through me that you suffer ?”

“ It is through you.”

“ Will you tell me how ?”

He had already found the chapter. His

tears dropped on it as he pointed to the verse.

“Read,” he answered, “what the most compassionate of all Teachers has said, in the Sermon on the Mount.”

She read: “Whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”

Another innocent woman, in her place, might have pointed to that first part of the verse, which pre-supposes the infidelity of the divorced wife, and might have asked if those words applied to *her*. This woman, knowing that she had lost him, knew also what she owed to herself. She rose in silence, and held out her hand at parting.

He paused before he took her hand. “Can you forgive me?” he asked.

She said: “I can pity you.”

“Can you look back to the day of your marriage? Can you remember the words

which declared the union between you and your husband to be separable only by death? Has he treated you with brutal cruelty?"

"Never!"

"Has he repented of his sin?"

"Yes."

"Ask your own conscience if there is not a worthier life for you and your child than the life that you are leading now." He waited, after that appeal to her. The silence remained unbroken. "Do not mistake me," he resumed gently. "I am not thinking of the calamity that has fallen on me in a spirit of selfish despair—I am looking to *your* future, and I am trying to show you the way which leads to hope. Catherine! have you no word more to say to me?"

In faint trembling tones she answered him at last :

“ You have left me but one word to say.
Farewell !”

He drew her to him gently, and kissed her on the forehead. The agony in his face was more than she could support ; she recoiled from it in horror. His last act was devoted to the tranquillity of the one woman whom he had loved. He signed to her to leave him.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE LARGEST NATURE, THE LONGEST LOVE.

MRS. PRESTY waited in the garden to be joined by her daughter and Captain Benny-deck, and waited in vain. It was past her grandchild's bed-time; she decided on returning to the house.

“Suppose we look for them in the sitting-room?” Kitty proposed.

“Suppose we wait a moment, before we go in?” her wise grandmother advised. “If I hear them talking, I shall take you upstairs to bed.”

“Why?”

“Because we mustn't interrupt them.”

“ Why ? ”

Mrs. Presty favoured Kitty with a hint relating to the management of inquisitive children which might prove useful to her in after-life. “ When you grow up to be a woman, my dear, beware of making the mistake that I have just committed. Never be foolish enough to mention your reasons when a child asks, Why ? ”

“ Was that how they treated *you*, Grand-mamma, when you were a child yourself ? ”

“ Of course it was ! ”

“ Why ? ”

They had reached the sitting-room door by this time. Kitty opened it without ceremony, and looked in. The room was empty.

Having confided her granddaughter to the nursemaid's care, Mrs. Presty knocked at Catherine's bedroom door. “ May I come in ? ”

“Come in directly! Where is Kitty?”

“Susan is putting her to bed.”

“Stop it! Kitty mustn’t go to bed. No questions. I’ll explain myself when you come back.” There was a wildness in her eyes, and a tone of stern command in her voice, which warned her mother to set dignity aside, and submit.

“I don’t ask what has happened,” Mrs. Presty resumed on her return. “That letter, that fatal letter to the Captain, has justified my worst fears. What in heaven’s name are we to do now?”

“We are to leave this hotel,” was the instant reply.

“When?”

“To-night.”

“Catherine! do you know what time it is?”

“Time enough to catch the last train to

London. Don't raise objections! If I stay at this place, with associations in every part of it which remind me of that unhappy man, I shall go mad! The shock I have suffered, the misery, the humiliation—I tell you it's more than I can bear. Stay here by yourself if you like; I mean to go."

She paced with frantic rapidity up and down the room. Mrs. Presty took the only way by which it was possible to calm her. "Compose yourself, Catherine, and all that you wish shall be done. I'll settle everything with the landlord, and give the maid her orders. Sit down by the open window; let the wind blow over you."

The railway service from Sydenham to London is a late service. At a few minutes before midnight they were in time for the last train. When they left the station,

Catherine was calm enough to communicate her plans for the future. The nearest hotel to the terminus would offer them accommodation for that night. On the next day they could find some quiet place in the country—no matter where, so long as they were not disturbed. “Give me rest and peace, and my mind will be easier,” Catherine said. “Let nobody know where to find me.”

These conditions were strictly observed—with an exception in favour of Mr. Sarrazin. While his client’s pecuniary affairs were still unsettled, the lawyer had his claim to be taken into her confidence.

* * * * *

The next morning found Captain Bennydeck still keeping his rooms at Sydenham. The state of his mind presented a complete contrast to the state of Catherine’s mind.

So far from sharing her aversion to the personal associations which were connected with the hotel, he found his one consolation in visiting the scenes which reminded him of the beloved woman whom he had lost. The reason for this was not far to seek. His was the largest nature, and his had been the most devoted love.

As usual, his letters were forwarded to him from his place of residence in London. Those addressed in handwritings that he knew were the first that he read. The others he took out with him to that sequestered part of the garden in which he had passed the happiest hours of his life by Catherine's side.

He had been thinking of her all the morning : he was thinking of her now.

His better judgment protested ; his accusing conscience warned him that he

was committing, not only an act of folly, but (with his religious convictions) an act of sin—and still she held her place in his thoughts. The manager had told him of her sudden departure from the hotel, and had declared with perfect truth that the place of her destination had not been communicated to him. Asked if she had left no directions relating to her correspondence, he had replied that his instructions were to forward all letters to her lawyer. On the point of inquiring next for the name and address, Bennydeck's sense of duty and sense of shame (roused at last) filled him with a timely contempt for himself. In feeling tempted to write to Catherine—in encouraging fond thoughts of her among scenes which kept her in his memory—he had been false to the very principles to which he had appealed at

their farewell interview. She had set him the right example, the example which he was determined to follow, in leaving the place. Before he could falter in his resolution, he gave notice of his departure. The one hope for him now was to find a refuge from himself in acts of mercy. Consolation was perhaps waiting for him in his Home.

His unopened correspondence offered a harmless occupation to his thoughts, in the meanwhile. One after another he read the letters, with an attention constantly wandering and constantly recalled, until he opened the last of them that remained. In a moment more his interest was absorbed. The first sentences in the letter told him that the deserted creature whom he had met in the garden—the stranger to whom he had offered help and consolation in the present

and in the future—was no other than the lost girl of whom he had been so long in search ; the daughter of Roderick Westersfield, once his dearest and oldest friend.

In the pages that followed, the writer confided to him her sad story ; leaving it to her father's friend to decide whether she was worthy of the sympathy which he had offered to her, when he thought she was a stranger.

This part of her letter was necessarily a repetition of what Bennydeck had read, in the confession which Catherine had addressed to him. That generous woman had been guilty of one, and but one, concealment of the truth. In relating the circumstances under which the elopement from Mount Morven had taken place, she had abstained, in justice to the sincerity of Sydney's repentance, from mentioning

Sydney's name. "Another instance," the Captain thought bitterly, as he closed the letter, "of the virtues which might have made the happiness of my life!"

But he was bound to remember—and he did remember—that there was now a new interest, tenderly associating itself with his life to come. The one best way of telling Sydney how dear she was to him already, for her father's sake, would be to answer her in person. He hurried away to London by the first train, and drove at once to Randal's place of abode to ask for Sydney's address.

Wondering what had become of the post-script to his letter, which had given Benny-deck the information of which he was now in search, Randal complied with his friend's request, and then ventured to allude to the report of the Captain's marriage engagement.

“Am I to congratulate you?” he asked.

“Congratulate me on having discovered Roderick Westerfield’s daughter.”

That reply, and the tone in which it was given, led Randal to ask if the engagement had been prematurely announced.

“There is no engagement at all,” Bennydeck answered, with a look which suggested that it might be wise not to dwell on the subject.

But the discovery was welcome to Randal, for his brother’s sake. He ran the risk of consequences, and inquired if Catherine was still to be found at the hotel.

The Captain answered by a sign in the negative.

Randal persisted. “Do you know where she has gone?”

“Nobody knows but her lawyer.”

“In that case,” Randal concluded, “I

shall get the information that I want.” Noticing that Bennydeck looked surprised, he mentioned his motive. “Herbert is pining to see Kitty,” he continued; “and I mean to help him. He has done all that a man could do to atone for the past. As things are, I believe I shall not offend Catherine, if I arrange for a meeting between father and child. What do you say?”

Bennydeck answered, earnestly and eagerly; “Do it at once!”

They left the house together—one to go to Sydney’s lodgings, the other on his way to Mr. Sarrazin’s office

CHAPTER LIV.

LET BYGONES BE BYGONES.

WHEN the servant at the lodgings announced a visitor, and mentioned his name, Sydney's memory (instead of dwelling on the recollection of the Captain's kindness) perversely recalled the letter that she had addressed to him, and reminded her that she stood in need of indulgence, which even so good a man might hesitate to grant. Bennydeck's first words told the friendless girl that her fears had wronged him.

“My dear, how like your father you are! You have his eyes and his smile; I can't tell you how pleasantly you remind me

of my dear old friend." He took her hand, and kissed her as he might have kissed a daughter of his own. "Do you remember me at home, Sydney, when you were a child? No: you must have been too young for that."

She was deeply touched. In faint trembling tones, she said: "I remember your name; my poor father often spoke of you."

A man who feels true sympathy is never in danger of mistaking his way to a woman's heart, when that woman has suffered. Bennydeck consoled, interested, charmed Sydney, by still speaking of the bygone days at home.

"I well remember how fond your father was of you, and what a bright little girl you were," the Captain went on. "You have forgotten, I dare say, the old-fashioned

sea-songs that he used to be so fond of teaching you. It was the strangest and prettiest contrast, to hear your small piping child's voice singing of storms and shipwrecks, and thunder and lightning, and reefing sails in cold and darkness, without the least idea of what it all meant. Your mother was strict in those days; you never amused her as you used to amuse your father and me. When she caught you searching my pockets for sweetmeats, she accused me of destroying your digestion before you were five years old. I went on spoiling it, for all that. The last time I saw you, my child, your father was singing 'The Mariners of England,' and you were on his knee trying to sing with him. You must have often wondered why you never saw anything more of me. Did you think I had forgotten you?"

“I am quite sure I never thought that!”

“You see I was in the Navy at the time,” the Captain resumed; “and we were ordered away to a foreign station. When I got back to England, miserable news was waiting for me. I heard of your father’s death, and of that shameful Trial. Poor fellow! He was as innocent, Sydney, as you are of the offence which he was accused of committing. The first thing I did was to set inquiries on foot after your mother and her children. It was some consolation to me to feel that I was rich enough to make your lives easy and agreeable to you. I thought money could do anything. A serious mistake, my dear—money couldn’t find the widow and her children. We supposed you were somewhere in London; and there, to my great

grief, it ended. From time to time—long afterwards, when we thought we had got the clue in our hands—I continued my inquiries, still without success. A poor woman and her little family are so easily engulfed in the big city! Years passed (more of them than I like to reckon up) before I heard of you at last by name. The person from whom I got my information told me how you were employed, and where.”

“ Oh, Captain Bennydeck, who could the person have been ? ”

“ A poor old broken-down actor, Sydney. You were his favourite pupil. Do you remember him ? ”

“ I should be ungrateful indeed if I could forget him. He was the only person in the school who was kind to me. Is the good old man still living ? ”

“ No ; he rests at last. I am glad to

say I was able to make his last days on earth the happiest days of his life."

"I wonder," Sydney confessed, "how you met with him."

"There was nothing at all romantic in my first discovery of him. I was reading the police reports in a newspaper. The poor wretch was brought before a magistrate, charged with breaking a window. His one last chance of escaping starvation in the streets was to get sent to prison. The magistrate questioned him, and brought to light a really heart-breaking account of misfortune, embittered by neglect on the part of people in authority who were bound to help him. He was remanded, so that inquiries might be made. I attended the court on the day when he appeared there again, and heard his statement confirmed. I paid his fine, and contrived to put him in a

way of earning a little money. He was very grateful, and came now and then to thank me. In that way I heard how his troubles had begun. He had asked for a small advance on the wretched wages that he received. Can you guess how the schoolmistress answered him ?”

“ I know but too well how she answered him,” Sydney said ; “ I was turned out of the house, too.”

“ And I heard of it,” the Captain replied, “ from the woman herself. Everything that could distress me she was ready to mention. She told me of your mother’s second marriage, of her miserable death, of the poor boy, your brother, missing, and never heard of since. But when I asked where you had gone she had nothing more to say. She knew nothing, and cared nothing, about you. If I had not become

acquainted with Mr. Randal Linley I might never have heard of you again. We will say no more of that, and no more of anything that has happened in the past time. From to-day, my dear, we begin a new life, and (please God) a happier life. Have you any plans of your own for the future?"

"Perhaps, if I could find help," Sydney said resignedly, "I might emigrate. Pride wouldn't stand in my way; no honest employment would be beneath my notice. Besides, if I went to America, I might meet with my brother."

"My dear child, after the time that has passed, there is no imaginable chance of your meeting with your brother—and you wouldn't know each other again if you did meet. Give up that vain hope and stay here with me. Be useful and be happy in your own country."

“ Useful ?” Sydney repeated sadly. “ Your own kind heart, Captain Benny-deck, is deceiving you. To be useful means, I suppose, to help others. Who will accept help from me ?”

“ I will, for one,” the Captain answered.

“ You !”

“ Yes. You can be of the greatest use to me—you shall hear how.”

He told her of the founding of his Home and of the good it had done. “ You are the very person,” he resumed, “ to be the good sister-friend that I want for my poor girls ; *you* can say for them what they cannot always say to me for themselves.”

The tears rose in Sydney’s eyes. “ It is hard to see such a prospect as that,” she said, “ and to give it up as soon as it is seen.”

“ Why give it up ?”

“Because I am not fit for it. You are as good as a father to those lost daughters of yours. If you give them a sister-friend she ought to have set them a good example. Have I done that? Will they listen to a girl who is no better than themselves?”

“Gladly! *Your* sympathy will find its way to their hearts, because it is animated by something that they can all feel in common—something nearer and dearer to them than a sense of duty. You won’t consent, Sydney, for their sakes? Will you do what I ask of you, for my sake?”

She looked at him, hardly able to understand—or, as it might have been, perhaps afraid to understand him. He spoke to her more plainly.

“I have kept it concealed from you,” he continued—“for why should I lay my load of suffering on a friend so young as you

are, so cruelly tried already ? Let me only say that I am in great distress. If you were with me, my child, I might be better able to bear it."

He held out his hand. Even a happy woman could hardly have found it in her heart to resist him. In silent sympathy and respect, Sydney kissed the hand that he had offered to her. It was the one way in which she could trust herself to answer him.

Still encouraging her to see new hopes and new interests in the future, the good Captain spoke of the share which she might take in the management of the Home, if she would like to be his secretary. With this view he showed her some written reports, relating to the institution, which had been sent to him during the time of his residence at Sydenham. She read them with an interest and attention which

amply justified his confidence in her capacity.

“These reports,” he explained to her, “are kept for reference ; but as a means of saving time, the substance of them is entered in the daily journal of our proceedings. Come, Sydney ! venture on a first experiment in your new character. I see pen, ink and paper on the table ; try if you can shorten one of the reports, without leaving out anything which it is important to know. For instance, the writer gives reasons for making his statement. Very well expressed, no doubt, but we don’t want reasons. Then, again, he offers his own opinion on the right course to take. Very creditable to him ; but I don’t want his opinion—I want his facts. Take the pen, my secretary, and set down his facts. Never mind his reflections.”

Proud and pleased, Sydney obeyed him. She had made her little abstract, and was reading it to him at his request, while he compared it with the report, when they were interrupted by a visitor. Randal Linley came in, and noticed the papers on the table with surprise. "Is it possible that I am interrupting business?" he asked.

Bennydeck answered with an assumed air of importance which was in itself a compliment to Sydney: "You find me engaged on the business of the Home with my new secretary."

Randal at once understood what had happened. He took his friend's arm, and led him to the other end of the room.

"You good fellow!" he said. "Add to your kindness by excusing me if I ask for a word with you in private."

Sydney rose to retire. After having encouraged her by a word of praise, the Captain proposed that she should get ready to go out, and should accompany him on a visit to the Home. He opened the door for her as respectfully as if the poor girl had been one of the highest ladies in the land.

“I have seen my friend Sarrazin,” Randal began, “and I have persuaded him to trust me with Catherine’s present address. I can send Herbert there immediately, if you will only help me.”

“How can I help you?”

“Will you allow me to tell my brother that your engagement is broken off?”

Bennydeck shrank from the painful allusion, and showed it.

Randal explained. “I am grieved,” he said, “to distress you by referring to this

subject again. But if my brother is left under the false impression that your engagement will be followed by your marriage, he will refuse to intrude himself on the lady who was once his wife."

The Captain understood. "Say what you please about me," he replied. "Unite the father and child—and you may reconcile the husband and wife."

"Have you forgotten," Randal asked, "that the marriage has been dissolved?"

Bennydeck's answer ignored the law. "I remember," he said, "that the marriage has been profaned."

CHAPTER LV.

LEAVE IT TO THE CHILD.

THE front windows of Brightwater Cottage look out on a quiet green lane in Middlesex, which joins the highroad within a few miles of the market town of Uxbridge. Through the pretty garden at the back runs a little brook, winding its merry way to a distant river. The few rooms in this pleasant place of residence are well (too well) furnished, having regard to the limits of a building which is a cottage in the strictest sense of the word. Water-colour drawings by the old English masters of the art ornament the dining-room. The parlour

has been transformed into a library. From floor to ceiling all four of its walls are covered with books. Their old and well-chosen bindings, seen in the mass, present nothing less than a feast of colour to the eye. The library and the works of art are described as heirlooms, which have passed into the possession of the present proprietor—one more among the hundreds of Englishmen who are ruined every year by betting on the Turf.

So sorely in need of a little ready money was this victim of gambling—tacitly permitted or conveniently ignored by the audacious hypocrisy of a country which rejoiced in the extinction of Baden, and which still shudders at the name of Monaco—that he was ready to let his pretty cottage for no longer a term than one month certain ; and he even allowed the elderly lady, who

drove the hardest of hard bargains with him, to lessen by one guinea the house-rent paid for each week. He took his revenge by means of an ironical compliment, addressed to Mrs. Presty. "What a saving it would be to the country, ma'am, if you were Chancellor of the Exchequer!" With perfect gravity Mrs. Presty accepted that well-earned tribute of praise. "You are quite right, sir; I should be the first official person known to the history of England who took proper care of the public money."

Within two days of the time when they had left the hotel at Sydenham, Catherine and her little family circle had taken possession of the cottage.

The two ladies were sitting in the library, each occupied with a book chosen from the well-stocked shelves. Catherine's reading appeared to be more than once interrupted

by Catherine's thoughts. Noticing this circumstance, Mrs. Presty asked if some remarkable event had happened, and if it was weighing heavily on her daughter's mind.

Catherine answered that she was thinking of Kitty, and that anxiety connected with the child did weigh heavily on her mind.

Some days had passed (she reminded Mrs. Presty) since the interview at which Herbert Linley had bidden her farewell. On that occasion he had referred to her proposed marriage (never to be a marriage now!) in terms of forbearance and generosity which claimed her sincere admiration. It might be possible for her to show a grateful appreciation of his conduct. Devotedly fond of his little daughter, he must have felt acutely his long separation from her; and it was quite likely that he might ask

to see Kitty. But there was an obstacle in the way of her willing compliance with that request, which it was impossible to think of without remorse, and which it was imperatively necessary to remove. Mrs. Presty would understand that she alluded to the shameful falsehood which had led the child to suppose that her father was dead.

Strongly disapproving of the language in which her daughter had done justice to the conduct of the divorced husband, Mrs. Presty merely replied : “ You are Kitty’s mother ; I leave it to you ”—and returned to her reading.

Catherine could not feel that she had deserved such an answer as this. “ Did I plan the deception ? ” she asked. “ Did I tell the lie ? ”

Mrs. Presty was not in the least offended. “ You are comparatively innocent, my dear,”

she admitted, with an air of satirical indulgence. “ You only consented to the deception, and profited by the lie. Suppose we own the truth ? You are afraid.”

Catherine owned the truth in the plainest terms : “ Yes, I *am* afraid.”

“ And you leave it to me ?”

“ I leave it to you.”

Mrs. Presty complacently closed her book. “ I was quite prepared to hear it,” she said ; “ all the unpleasant complications since your Divorce—and Heaven only knows how many of them have presented themselves—have been left for me to unravel. It so happens—though I was too modest to mention it prematurely—that I have unravelled *this* complication. If one only has eyes to see it, there is a way out of every difficulty that can possibly happen.” She pushed the book that she had been reading

across the table to Catherine. "Turn to page two hundred and forty," she said. "There is the way out."

The title of the book was "Disasters at Sea;" and the page contained the narrative of a shipwreck. On evidence apparently irresistible, the drowning of every soul on board the lost vessel had been taken for granted—when a remnant of the passengers and crew had been discovered on a desert island, and had been safely restored to their friends. Having read this record of suffering and suspense, Catherine looked at her mother, and waited for an explanation.

"Don't you see it?" Mrs. Presty asked.

"I can't say that I do."

The old lady's excellent temper was not in the least ruffled, even by this.

"Quite inexcusable on my part," she acknowledged; "I ought to have re-

membered that you don't inherit your mother's vivid imagination. Age has left me in full possession of those powers of invention which used to amaze your poor father. He wondered how it was that I never wrote a novel. Mr. Presty's appreciation of my intellect was equally sincere ; but he took a different view. 'Beware, my dear,' he said, 'of trifling with the distinction which you now enjoy : you are one of the most remarkable women in England—you have never written a novel.' Pardon me ; I am wandering into the region of literary anecdote, when I ought to explain myself. Now pray attend to this :—I propose to tell Kitty that I have found a book which is sure to interest her ; and I shall direct her attention to the lamentable story which you have just read. She is quite sharp enough (there are sparks of my intellectual fire in

Kitty) to ask if the friends of the poor shipwrecked people were not very much surprised to see them again. To this I shall answer: ‘Very much, indeed, for their friends thought they were dead.’ Ah, you dear dull child, you see it now !”

Catherine saw it so plainly that she was eager to put the first part of the experiment to an immediate trial.

Kitty was sent for, and made her appearance with a fishing-rod over her shoulder. “I’m going to the brook,” she announced ; “expect some fish for dinner to-day.”

A wary old hand stopped Catherine, in the act of presenting the “Disasters at Sea,” to Kitty’s notice ; and a voice, distinguished by insinuating kindness, said to the child : “When you have done fishing, my dear, come to me ; I have got a nice book for you to read.—How very absurd of you,

Catherine," Mrs. Presty continued, when they were alone again, "to expect the child to read, and draw her own conclusions, while her head is full of fishing! If there are any fish in the brook, *she* won't catch them. When she comes back disappointed, and says: 'What am I to do now?' the 'Disasters at Sea' will have a chance. I make it a rule never to boast; but if there is a thing that I understand, it's the management of children. Why didn't I have a large family?"

Attended by the faithful Susan, Kitty baited her hook, and began to fish where the waters of the brook were overshadowed by trees.

A little harbour covered by a thatched roof, and having walls of wooden lattice-work, hidden by creepers climbing over them inside and out, offered an attractive place of

rest on this sheltered side of the garden. Having brought her work with her, the nursemaid retired to the summer-house and diligently plied her needle, looking at Kitty from time to time through the open door. The air was delightfully cool, the pleasant rippling of the brook fell soothingly on the ear, the seat in the summer-house received a sitter with the softly-yielding submission of elastic wires. Susan had just finished her early dinner : in mind and body alike, this good girl was entirely and deservedly at her ease. By finely succeeding degrees, her eyelids began to show a tendency downward ; her truant needle-work escaped from her fingers, and lay lazily on her lap. She snatched it up with a start, and sewed with severe resolution until her thread was exhausted. The reel was ready at her side ; she took it up for

a fresh supply, and innocently rested her head against the leafy and flowery wall of the arbour. Was it thought that gradually closed her eyes again? or was it sleep? In either case, Susan was lost to all sense of passing events; and Susan's breathing became musically regular, emulous of the musical regularity of the brook.

As a lesson in patience, the art of angling pursued in a shallow brook has its moral uses. Kitty fished, and waited, and renewed the bait and tried again, with a command of temper which would have been a novelty in Susan's experience, if Susan had been awake. But the end which comes to all things came also to Kitty's patience. Leaving her rod on the bank, she let the line and hook take care of themselves, and wandered away in search of some new amusement.

Lingering here and there to gather flowers from the beds as she passed them, Kitty was stopped by a shrubbery, with a rustic seat placed near it, which marked the limits of the garden on that side. The path that she had been following led her farther and farther away from the brook, but still left it well in view. She could see, on her right hand, the clumsy old wooden bridge which crossed the stream, and served as a means of communication for the servants and the tradespeople, between the cottage and the village on the lower ground a mile away.

The child felt hot and tired. She rested herself on the bench, and, spreading the flowers by her side, began to arrange them in the form of a nosegay. Still true to her love for Sydney, she had planned to present the nosegay to her mother; offering

the gift as an excuse for returning to the forbidden subject of her governess, and for asking when they might hope to see each other again.

Choosing flowers and then rejecting them, trying other colours and wondering whether she had accomplished a change for the better, Kitty was startled by the sound of a voice calling to her from the direction of the brook.

She looked round, and saw a gentleman crossing the bridge. He asked the way to Brightwater Cottage.

There was something in his voice that attracted her—how or why, at her age, she never thought of inquiring. Eager and excited, she ran across the lawn which lay between her and the brook, before she answered the gentleman's question.

As they approached each other, his eyes

sparkled, his face flushed; he cried out joyfully, "Here she is!"—and then changed again in an instant. A horrid pallor overspread his face as the child stood looking at him with innocent curiosity. He startled Kitty, not because he seemed to be shocked and distressed, she hardly noticed that; but because he was so like—although he was thinner and paler and older—oh, so like her lost father!

"This is the cottage, sir," she said to him faintly.

His sorrowful eyes rested kindly on her. And yet, it seemed as if she had in some way disappointed him. The child ventured to say: "Do you know me, sir?"

He answered in the saddest voice that Kitty had ever heard: "My little girl, what makes you think I know you?"

She was at a loss how to reply, fearing

to distress him. She could only say :
“ You are so like my poor Papa.”

He shook and shuddered, as if she had said something to frighten him. He took her hand. On that hot day, his fingers felt as cold as if it had been winter time. He led her back to the seat that she had left. “ I’m tired, my dear,” he said. “ Shall we sit down ?” It was surely true that he was tired. He seemed hardly able to lift one foot after the other ; Kitty pitied him. “ I think you must be ill ;” she said, as they took their places, side by side, on the bench.

“ No ; not ill. Only weary, and perhaps a little afraid of frightening you.” He kept her hand in his hand, and patted it from time to time. “ My dear, why did you say ‘ *poor* Papa,’ when you spoke of your father just now ?”

“My father is dead, sir.”

He turned his face away from her, and pressed both hands on his breast, as if he felt some dreadful pain there, and was trying to hide it. But he mastered the pain; and he said a strange thing to her—vrey gently, but still it was strange. He wished to know who had told her that her father was dead.

“Grandmamma told me.”

“Do you remember what Grandmamma said?”

“Yes—she told me Papa was drowned at sea.”

He said something to himself, and said it twice over. “Not her mother! Thank God, not her mother!” What did he mean?

Kitty looked and looked at him, and wondered and wondered. He put his arm

round her. "Come near to me," he said. "Don't be afraid of me, my dear." She moved nearer, and showed him that she was not afraid. The poor man seemed hardly to understand her. His eyes grew dim; he sighed like a person in distress; he said: "Your father would have kissed you, little one, if he had been alive. You say I am like your father. May I kiss you?"

She put her hands on his shoulder, and lifted her face to him. In the instant when he kissed her, the child knew him. Her heart beat suddenly with an overpowering delight; she started back from his embrace. "That's how Papa used to kiss me!" she cried. "Oh! you *are* Papa! Not drowned! not drowned!" She flung her arms round his neck, and held him as if she would never let him go

again. “Dear Papa! Poor lost Papa!” His tears fell on her face; he sobbed over her. “My sweet darling! my own little Kitty!”

The hysterical passion that had overcome her father filled her with piteous surprise. How strange, how dreadful that he should cry—that he should be so sorry when she was so glad! She took her little handkerchief out of the pocket of her pinafore, and dried his eyes. “Are you thinking of the cruel sea, Papa? No! the good sea, the kind, bright, beautiful sea that has given you back to me, and to Mamma——!”

They had forgotten her mother!—and Kitty only discovered it now. She caught at one of her father’s hands hanging helpless at his side, and pulled at it as if her little strength could force him to his feet.

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“Come,” she cried, “and make Mamma as happy as I am !”

He hesitated. She sprang on his knee ; she pressed her cheek against his cheek with the caressing tenderness, familiar to him in the first happy days when she was an infant. “Oh, Papa, are you going to be unkind to me for the first time in your life ?”

His momentary resistance was at an end. He was as weak in her hands now, as if he had been the child and she had been the man.

Laughing and singing and dancing round him, Kitty led the way to the window of the room that opened on the garden. Some one had closed it on the inner side. She tapped impatiently at the glass. Her mother heard the tapping ; her mother came to the window ; her mother ran

out to meet them. Since the miserable time when they had left Mount Morven, since the long unnatural separation of the parents and the child, those three were together once more !

AFTER THE STORY.

1.—*The Lawyer's Apology.*

THAT a woman of my wife's mature years should be jealous of one of the most exemplary husbands that the records of matrimony can produce is, to say the least of it, a discouraging circumstance. A man forgets that virtue is its own reward, and asks, What is the use of conjugal fidelity ?

However, the motto of married life is (or ought to be) : Peace at any price. I have been this day relieved from the condition of secrecy that has been imposed on me. You insisted on an explanation some time since. Here it is at last.

For the ten-thousandth time, my dear, in our joint lives, you are again right. That

letter, marked private, which I received at the domestic tea-table, was what you positively declared it to be, a letter from a lady—a charming lady, plunged in the deepest perplexity. We had been well known to each other for many years, as lawyer and client. She wanted advice on this occasion also—and wanted it in the strictest confidence. Was it consistent with my professional duty to show her letter to my wife? Mrs. Sarrazin says Yes. Mrs. Sarrazin's husband says No.

Let me add that the lady was a person of unblemished reputation, and that she was placed in a false position through no fault of her own. In plain English, she was divorced. Ah, my dear (to speak in the vivid language of the people), do you smell a rat?

Yes: my client was Mrs. Norman; and

to her pretty cottage in the country I betook myself the next day. There I found my excellent friend Randal Linley, present by special invitation.

Stop a minute. Why do I write all this, instead of explaining myself by word of mouth? My love, you are a member of an old and illustrious family; you honoured me when you married me; and you have (as your father told me on our wedding day) the high and haughty temper of your race. I foresee an explosion of this temper, and I would rather have my writing-paper blown up than be blown up myself.

Is this a cowardly confession on my part? All courage, Mrs. Sarrazin, is relative: the bravest man living has a cowardly side to his character, though it may not always be found out. Some years ago, at a public dinner, I sat next to an

officer in the British army. At one time in his life he had led a forlorn hope. At another time, he had picked up a wounded soldier, and had carried him to the care of the surgeons through a hail-storm of the enemy's bullets. Hot courage and cool courage, this true hero possessed both. *I* saw the cowardly side of his character. He lost his colour; perspiration broke out on his forehead; he trembled; he talked nonsense; he was frightened out of his wits. And all for what? Because he had to get on his legs and make a speech!

Well: Mrs. Norman, and Randal Linley, and I, sat down to our consultation at the cottage.

What did my fair client want?

She contemplated marrying for the second time, and she wanted my advice as a lawyer, and my encouragement as an old friend. I

was quite ready; I only waited for the particulars. Mrs. Norman became dreadfully embarrassed, and said: "I refer you to my brother-in-law."

I looked at Randal. "Once her brother-in-law, no doubt," I said; "but after the Divorce——" My friend stopped me there. "After the Divorce," he remarked, "I may be her brother-in-law again."

If this meant anything, it meant that she was actually going to marry Herbert Linley again. This was too ridiculous. "If it's a joke," I said, "I have heard better fun in my time. If it's only an assertion, I don't believe it."

"Why not?" Randal asked.

"Saying I do want you, in one breath—and I don't want you, in another—seems to be a little hard on Divorce," I ventured to suggest.

“Don’t expect *me* to sympathize with Divorce,” Randal said.

I answered that smartly. “No; I’ll wait till you are married.”

He took it seriously. “Don’t misunderstand me,” he replied. “Where there is absolute cruelty, or where there is deliberate desertion, on the husband’s part, I see the use and the reason for Divorce. If the unhappy wife can find an honourable man who will protect her, or an honourable man who will offer her a home, Society and Law, which are responsible for the institution of marriage, are bound to allow a woman outraged under the shelter of their institution to marry again. But, where the husband’s fault is sexual frailty, I say the English law which refuses Divorce on that ground alone is right, and the Scotch law which grants it is wrong. . Religion,

which rightly condemns the sin, pardons it on the condition of true penitence. Why is a wife not to pardon it for the same reason? Why are the lives of a father, a mother, and a child to be wrecked, when those lives may be saved by the exercise of the first of Christian virtues—forgiveness of injuries? In such a case as this I regret that Divorce exists; and I rejoice when husband and wife and child are one flesh again, re-united by the law of Nature, which is the law of God.”

I might have disputed with him; but I thought he was right. I also wanted to make sure of the facts.

“Am I really to understand,” I asked, “that Mr. Herbert Linley is to be this lady’s husband for the second time?”

“If there is no lawful objection to it,” Randal said—“decidedly Yes.”

My good wife, in all your experience you never saw your husband stare as he stared at that moment. Here was a lady divorced by her own lawful desire and at her own personal expense, thinking better of it after no very long interval, and proposing to marry the man again. Was there ever anything so grossly improbable? Where is the novelist who would be bold enough to invent such an incident as this?

Never mind the novelist. How did it end?

Of course it could only end in one way, so far as I was concerned. The case being without precedent in my experience, I dropped my professional character at the outset. Speaking next as a friend, I had only to say to Mrs. Norman: "The Law has declared you and Mr. Herbert Linley to be single people. Do what other single

people do. Buy a Licence, and give notice at a church — and by all means send wedding cards to the judge who divorced you.”

Said ; and, in another fortnight, done. Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Linley were married again this morning ; and Randal and I were the only witnesses present at the ceremony, which was strictly private.

2.—*The Lawyer's Defence.*

I wonder whether the foregoing pages of my writing-paper have been torn to pieces, and thrown into the waste-paper basket ? You wouldn't litter the carpet. No. I may be torn in pieces, but I do you justice for all that.

What are the objections to the divorced husband and wife becoming husband and wife again ? Mrs. Presty has stated them

in the following order. Am I wrong in assuming that, on this occasion at least, you will agree with Mrs. Presty ?

First Objection : Nobody has ever done such a thing before.

Second Objection : Penitent or not penitent, Mr. Herbert Linley doesn't deserve it.

Third Objection : No respectable person will visit them.

First Reply : The question is not whether the thing has been done before, but whether the doing of the thing is right in itself. There is no clause in the marriage service forbidding a wife to forgive her husband ; but there is a direct prohibition to any separation between them. It is therefore not wrong to forgive Mr. Herbert Linley, and it is absolutely right to marry him again.

Second Reply : When their child brings

him home, and takes it for granted that her father and mother should live together, *because* they are her father and mother, innocent Kitty has appealed from the Law of Divorce to the Law of Nature. Whether Herbert Linley has deserved it or whether he has not, there he is in the only fit place for him—and there is an end of the second objection.

Third Reply : A flat contradiction to the assertion that no respectable person will visit her. Mrs. Sarrazin will visit her. Yes, you will, my dear ! Not because I insist upon it—Do I ever insist on anything ? No ; you will act on your own responsibility, out of compassion for a misguided old woman. Judge for yourself when you read what follows, if Mrs. Presty is not sadly in need of the good example of an ornament to her sex.

The Evil Genius of the family joined us in the cottage parlour when our consultation had come to an end. I had the honour of communicating the decision at which we had arrived. Mrs. Presty marched to the door ; and, from that commanding position, addressed a few farewell remarks to her daughter :

“I have done with you, Catherine. You have reached the limits of my maternal endurance at last. I shall set up my own establishment, and live again—in memory—with Mr. Norman and Mr. Presty. May you be happy. I don’t anticipate it.”

She left the room—and came back again for a last word, addressed this time to Randal Linley.

“When you next see your friend, Captain Bennydeck, give him my compli-

ments, Mr. Randal, and say that [I congratulate him on having been jilted by my daughter. It would have been a sad thing indeed, if such a sensible man had married an idiot. Good morning.”

She left the room again, and came back again for another last word, addressed on this occasion to me. Her better nature made an effort to express itself, not altogether without success.

“I think it quite likely, Mr. Sarrazin, that some dreadful misfortune will fall on my daughter, as the punishment of her undutiful disregard of her mother’s objections. In that case, I shall feel it my duty to return, and administer maternal consolation. When you write, address me at my banker’s. I make allowances for a lawyer, sir ; I don’t blame You.”

She opened the door for the third time—

stepped out, and stepped back again into the room—suddenly gave her daughter a fierce kiss—returned to the door—shook her fist at Mrs. Linley with a theatrically-threatening gesture — said, “Unnatural child!”—and, after this exhibition of her better nature, and her worse, left us at last. When you visit the re-married pair on their return from their second honeymoon, take Mrs. Presty with you.

3.—*The Lawyer's Last Word.*

“When you force this ridiculous and regrettable affair on my attention” (I think I hear Mrs. Sarrazin say), “the least you can do is to make your narrative complete. But perhaps you propose to tell me personally what has become of Kitty, and what well-deserved retribution has overtaken Miss Westerfield.”

No : I propose in this case also to communicate my information in writing—at the safe distance from home of my office in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Kitty accompanies her father and mother to the Continent, of course. But she insisted on first saying good-bye to the dear friend, once the dear governess, whom she loves. Randal and I volunteered to take her (with her mother's ready permission) to see Miss Westerfield. Try not to be angry. Try not to tear me up.

We found Captain Bennydeck and his pretty secretary enjoying a little rest and refreshment, after a long morning's work for the good of the Home. The Captain was carving the chicken ; and Sydney, by his side, was making the salad. The house-cat occupied a third chair, with her

eyes immovably fixed on the movements of the knife and fork. Perhaps I was thinking of sad past days. Any way, it seemed to me to be as pretty a domestic scene as a man could wish to look at. The arrival of Kitty made the picture complete.

Our visit was necessarily limited by a due remembrance of the hour of departure, by an early tidal train. Kitty's last words to Sydney bade her bear their next meeting in mind, and not be melancholy at only saying good-bye for a time. Like all children, she asks strange questions. When we were out in the street again, she said to her uncle :

“Do you think my nice Captain will marry Syd?”

Randal had noticed, in Captain Benny-deck's face, signs which betrayed that the

bitterest disappointment of his life was far from being a forgotten disappointment yet. If it had been put by any other person, poor Kitty's absurd question might have met with a bitter reply. As it was, her uncle only said: "My dear child, that is no business of yours or mine."

Not in the least discouraged, Kitty turned to me.

"What do *you* think, Samuel?"

I followed Randal's lead, and answered, "How should I know?"

The child looked from one to the other of us. "Shall I tell you what I think?" she said, "I think you are both of you humbugs."

THE END.

[May, 1886.]



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